

Video the Perfectionist's Guide to Watchdog® Fantastic Video

No. 1/1990/\$4.50



PREMIERE ISSUE

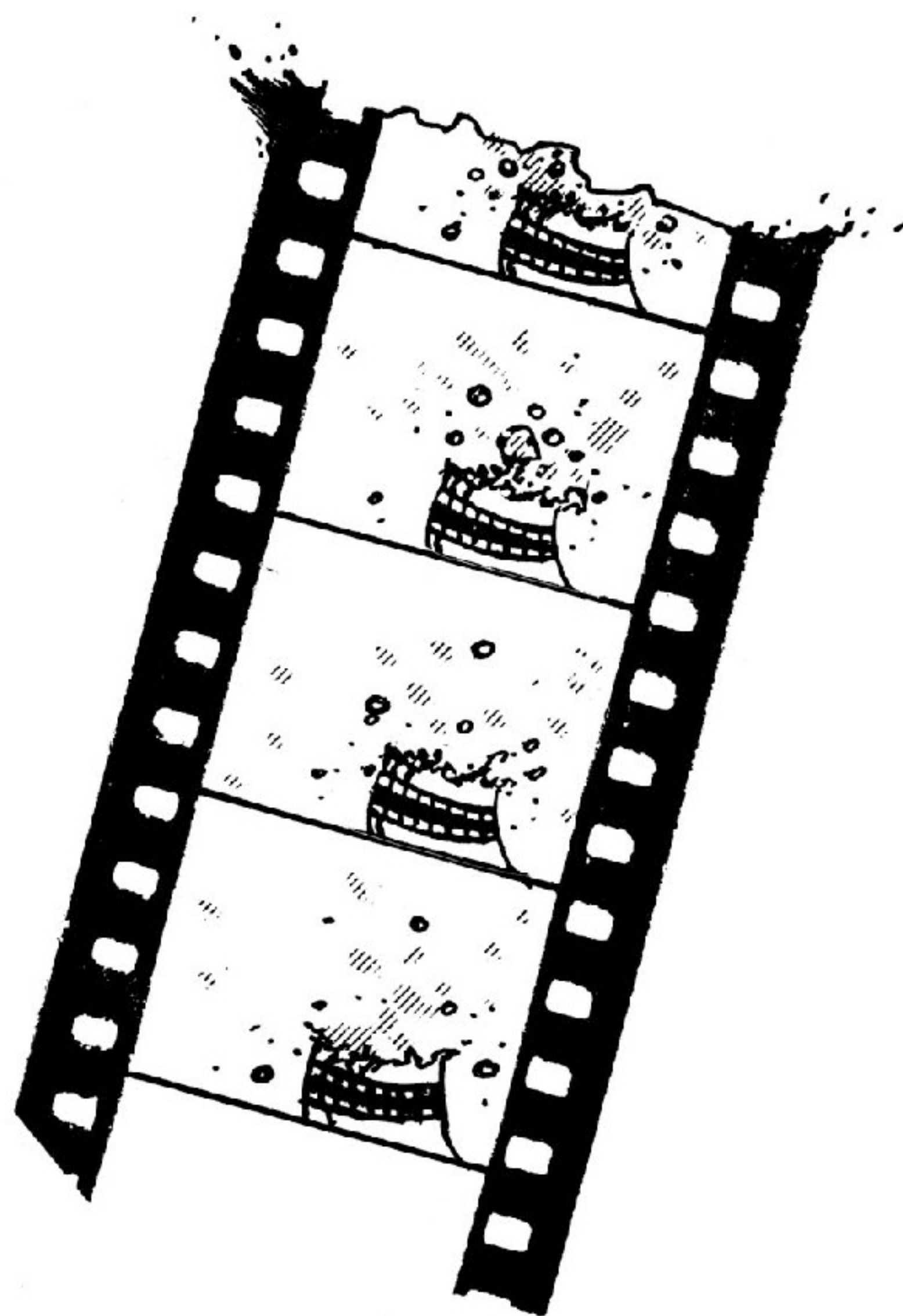
★ HOW TO READ A FRANCO FILM

A Bold New Look at Spain's Wildest Filmmaker

★ Steve Bissette's
UNCUT AND RUN

★ The Resurfacing of
CARNIVAL OF SOULS

★ RARITIES • RETITLINGS • RESTORATIONS



1990
Number 1

VIDEO WATCHDOG®

*"What the cinema can do better than literature or the
spoken drama is to be fantastic."*

Aldous Huxley

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It may be the biggest list since
Adam named the animals

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Our readers speak out – already!

Front: A lost soul surfaces in Herk Harvey's *CARNIVAL OF SOULS* (1962).
Inside: Illustration by Stephen R. Bissette.
Back: Morpho (Riccardo Valle) has his hands full with Perla Cristal in
Franco's *THE AWFUL DR. ORLOFF* (1962).

Kennel

LUCAS BALBO is the man behind NOSTALGIA (78 Rue de la Folie-Régnault, 75011 Paris, France) – the magazine, publishing company and photographic archive. His research and reviews have previously appeared in SHOCK XPRESS and IMPACT, and his interview with Paul Naschy will appear in PSYCHOTRONIC VIDEO #7.

STEPHEN R. BISSETTE edits and publishes TABOO, (P.O. Box 442, Wilmington, VT 05363). Among his many current projects are a 4-part comics adaptation of **NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD**, and a book entitled WE ARE GOING TO EAT YOU!, a study of Third World Cannibal Films, for FantaCo Enterprises.

CRAIG LEDBETTER has written film reviews for the British magazine SHOCK XPRESS. After publishing 43 mailings of HI-TECH TERROR, he found his true calling with the inimitable monthly newsletter EUROPEAN TRASH CINEMA – now in its 10th issue (\$6 for 12 issues; Box 5367, Kingwood, TX 77325).

MICHAEL LENNICK is a Toronto-based filmmaker with a background in special effects (**VIDEODROME**, TV's **WAR OF THE WORLDS**); his documentary, **THE NEW MAGICIANS** (1987) is an excellent introduction to the subject. He has written an original screenplay, **EYE CANDY**, which he plans to direct this year.

TIM LUCAS' "Video Watchdog" column appears regularly in GOREZONE. His graphic novel THROAT SPROCKETS is being serialized in TABOO and his short story "The Room of Presidents" is scheduled to appear in the British horror journal, FEAR.

JEFF SMITH publishes the always entertaining and eclectic fanzine WET PAINT – now in its 28th issue (\$2.50/single issue or \$10/4 issues; 2106 Tradewind #182, Mesquite, TX 75150).

DAVID WALKER has written some conspicuously fine essays on horror films in WET PAINT, several of which are showcased in the recent BEST OF WET PAINT (\$5.00, address above).

THANKS TO:

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The Watchdog Barks



WELCOME TO THE PREMIERE issue of **VIDEO WATCHDOG**, the Perfectionist's Guide to Fantastic Video. For those

baffled by the term "fantastic video," this publication is specifically intended as a consumer's guide to horror, science fiction and fantasy films on video tapes and discs; in fact, we'll go beyond that to include any film we feel was executed with a noticeable degree of imagination.

Why devote a consumer-oriented guide exclusively to fantastic video? The answer is simple. This *genre* gave birth to motion pictures, yet no other kind of motion picture is so consistently subjected to the slings and arrows of outrageous editorial meddling; horror films in particular. Foreign horror films, even *more* particularly. The process begins before the films hit the theatres, with distributors changing their titles to make the subject matter more emphatic [i.e., Dario Argento's *Tenebrae* becomes **UNSANE**]. Then the MPAA steps in; suddenly the film is ten minutes shorter – removing not only bloody violence, but directorial flourishes and plot. The video release is free to reincorporate the missing footage – does it? How can you possibly know, when most companies print a generic "90 minutes" running time on their box? In America, widescreen films are usually cropped to make use of the full TV screen – has any important visual information been cropped out? How can you tell? The same movie is released to video in other countries, yes – but which version is most complete? These were the symptoms, for many film fans, of Excedrin Headaches #1980-89.

If one accepts that each decade provides the antidote to the ten years that came before, the Nineties should be a remarkable decade for the fantasy cinema. By the same token, after 10 years of blood-bathed press releases and six-pack personality pieces, it is time for the writing devoted to the *genre* to become more enlightened. Enlightening. Cinema itself was born as a medium for magic and fantasy, yet fantasy film journalism remains in its infancy. We want to take the guilt out of your guilty pleasures. We wear this intention on our sleeve: our covers will always put forth what is best – not necessarily bloodiest – about the *genre*, using only those photos which instill a sense of wonder, or those which meld the chilling and the beautiful to fascinate and disturb us in ways we can't quite explain.



VIDEO WATCHDOG hopes to usher in 1990 as the beginning of a New Decade of Information. Every fantasy film magazine has its age-group: you've been through the grade school, the high school, perhaps even twenty-seven irregular issues of college. We would like VIDEO WATCHDOG to be your (and our) Master's Thesis. We want our readers to finish every issue in a state of exhaustion and exhilaration, feeling changed by what they've learned, and incredulous that the experience has been obtained at such a small investment.

As a matter of policy, VIDEO WATCHDOG will not publish video reviews, at least not in the traditional sense (i.e., year-old movie reviews); instead, we will critique what really counts: the way a film has been *presented* on video. Obviously then, this is not a publication for casual readers; not everyone may care to read this deeply into their favorite films. But we think there is enough of an audience out there, starved for information, to keep us working along these lines for quite a few issues to come.

This magazine will sometimes deal with descriptions of material edited from fantasy films to avoid "X" ratings, therefore we've had to consider how to present such material without imposing similar restrictions on our readership. Our policy will simply be to cover adult material in a distinctly unsalacious and unexploitative way. While VIDEO WATCHDOG is not a magazine for children (or most young teens), we think the Right to Information is ultimately better served by preparing a journal that video store owners and foreign customs officials won't find objectionable. Our agenda is to inform, not offend: if we felt otherwise, we'd splash a cadaver across the cover and call ourselves REMAINS TO BE SEEN.

One last bit of Watchdog Philosophy: we feel that all news is equally valid and valuable to our readers. For this reason, VIDEO WATCHDOG won't be announcing in advance the contents of future issues. Our coverage intends to *stimulate*, as well as satisfy, our readers' curiosity. All we promise is definitive, informative writing from some of the best writers, journalists, and archivists in the field. To ensure this quality (and a minimum of editorial distraction), articles will be assigned and accepted by invitation only. Readers, however, are encouraged to actively participate in these pages by submitting news items. Should you notice scenes missing from a video, or discover an old film marauding under a new title, or see a movie's surprise ending given away in its liner notes, *whatever* – let VIDEO WATCHDOG know, and we'll credit you in our pages as one of the unhoodwinkable.

Use us. We're here to inform you, to warn you, and to enrich your appreciation of those films and filmmakers we cover. If the Eighties were the decade of SPFX, we hope to influence the Nineties as a decade of Information by providing a much-needed escape into aesthetics.

Tim Lucas

Watchdog News

Compiled by the Video Watchdog,
with Stephen R. Bissette, Michael
Lennick and David Walker

DANGEROUS OBSESSION: The Final Chapter

Many of you have been following the Watchdog's reports in GOREZONE about the controversial release of Lucio Fulci's **DANGEROUS OBSESSION** [aka *Il miele del diavolo*, "The Devil's Honey," 1987] on AIP Home Video. Since turning in my second GOREZONE report on the movie – which reported that some erotic scenes were censored by AIP prior to its "unrated" release – some further facts and fictions have floated to the surface.

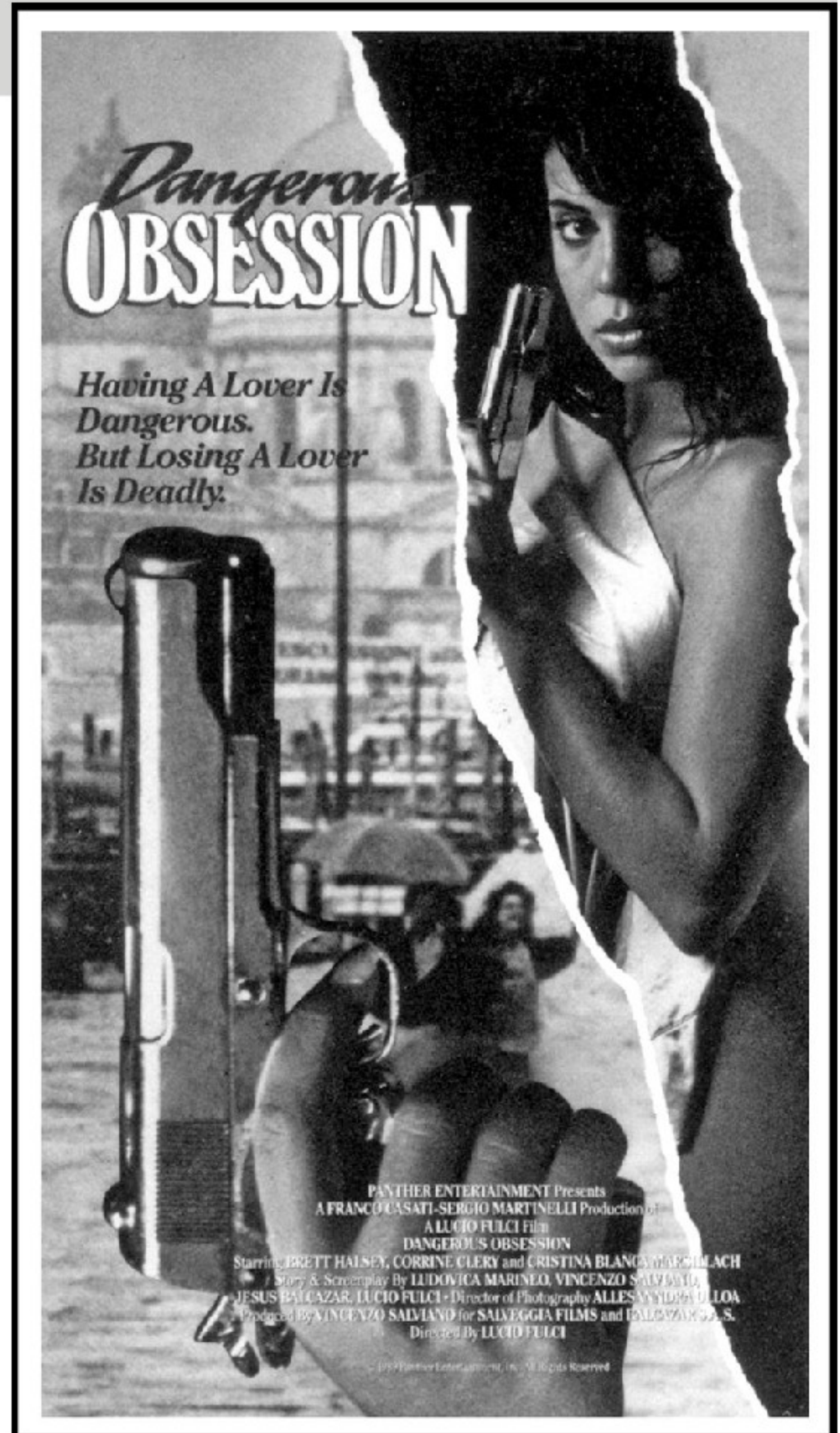
At various stages of the film's re-editing, release and post-release, AIP has made numerous, conflicting statements about what changes were being imposed on it, and why. This enigmatic "toning down" of the picture became even more mysterious when the version released appeared, after all the hype, to be virtually identical to the steamy version issued on Italian-language video.

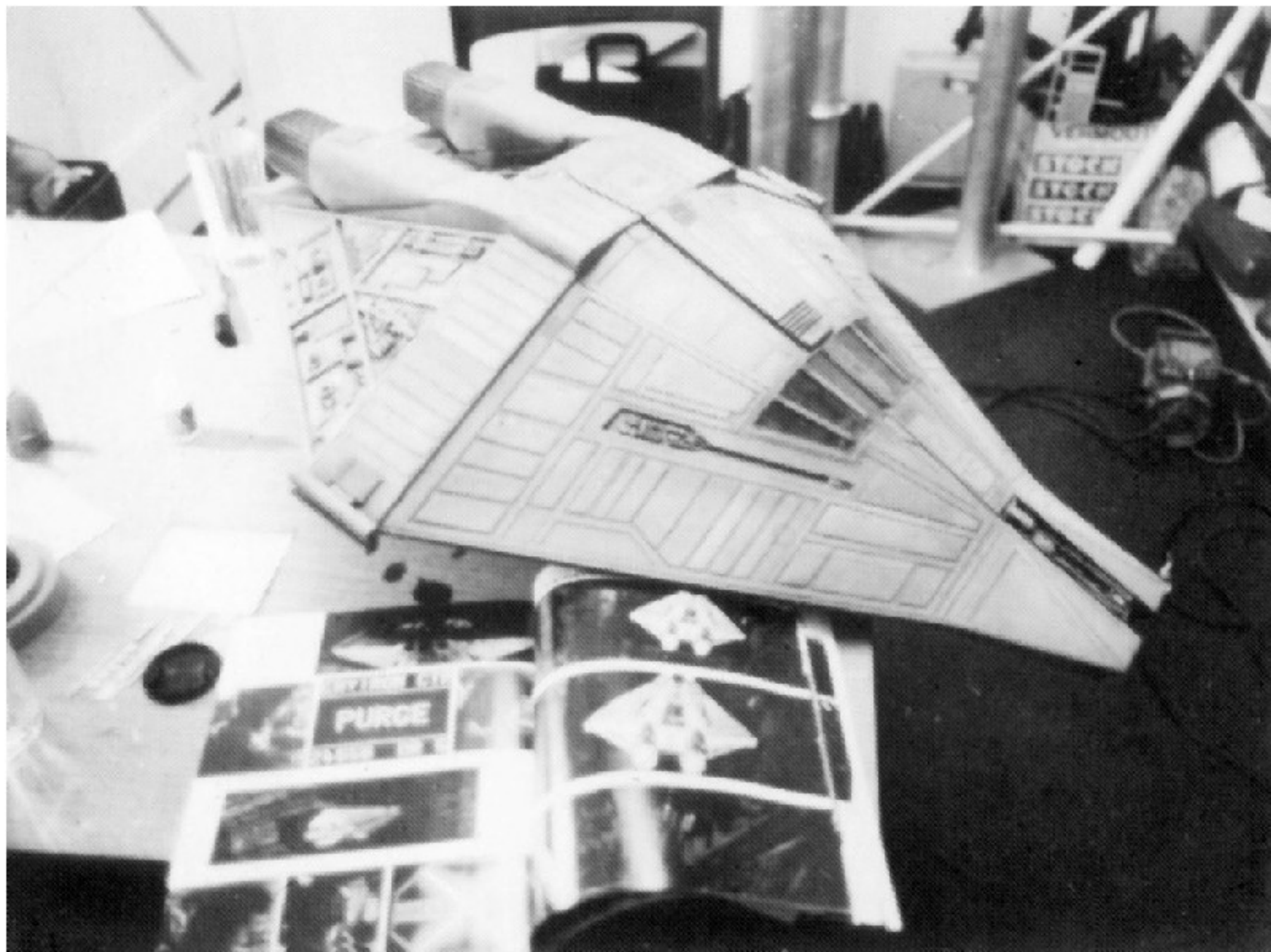
The most recent explanation I heard from the company was that

AIP's president Eric Parkinson found a "penetration shot" in the film's anal intercourse scene "personally offensive" and didn't care to have it included. Larry Barsky—who pens FANGORIA's "Video Chopping List" and works as an art director at AIP—helpfully sent the Watchdog a copy of **THE DEVIL'S HONEY**, the *uncut* version of Fulci's paen to kinky sex, to help bring this silly and obnoxious episode of Watchdoggery to an overdue close.

There are only three noticeable differences between the uncut **HONEY** and AIP's **OBSESSION**: **1)** the erotic saxophone scene has

been shortened by approximately 28 seconds, largely glimpses of Jessica (Blanca Marsillach) grinding her pubis against the vibrating bell of the instrument; **2)** the motorcycle masturbation scene is shorter by approximately 5 seconds, deleting two shots in which there is a pronounced up-and-down motion to Jessica's hand in Gianni (Stefano Madia)'s fly; and **3)** an entire scene which follows Jessica's striking of Dr. Simpson (Brett Halsey) with a blunt object, in which she unbuttons her jeans and raises her sweater to expose her stomach, rubbing Simpson's bloody face back and forth across her abdo-





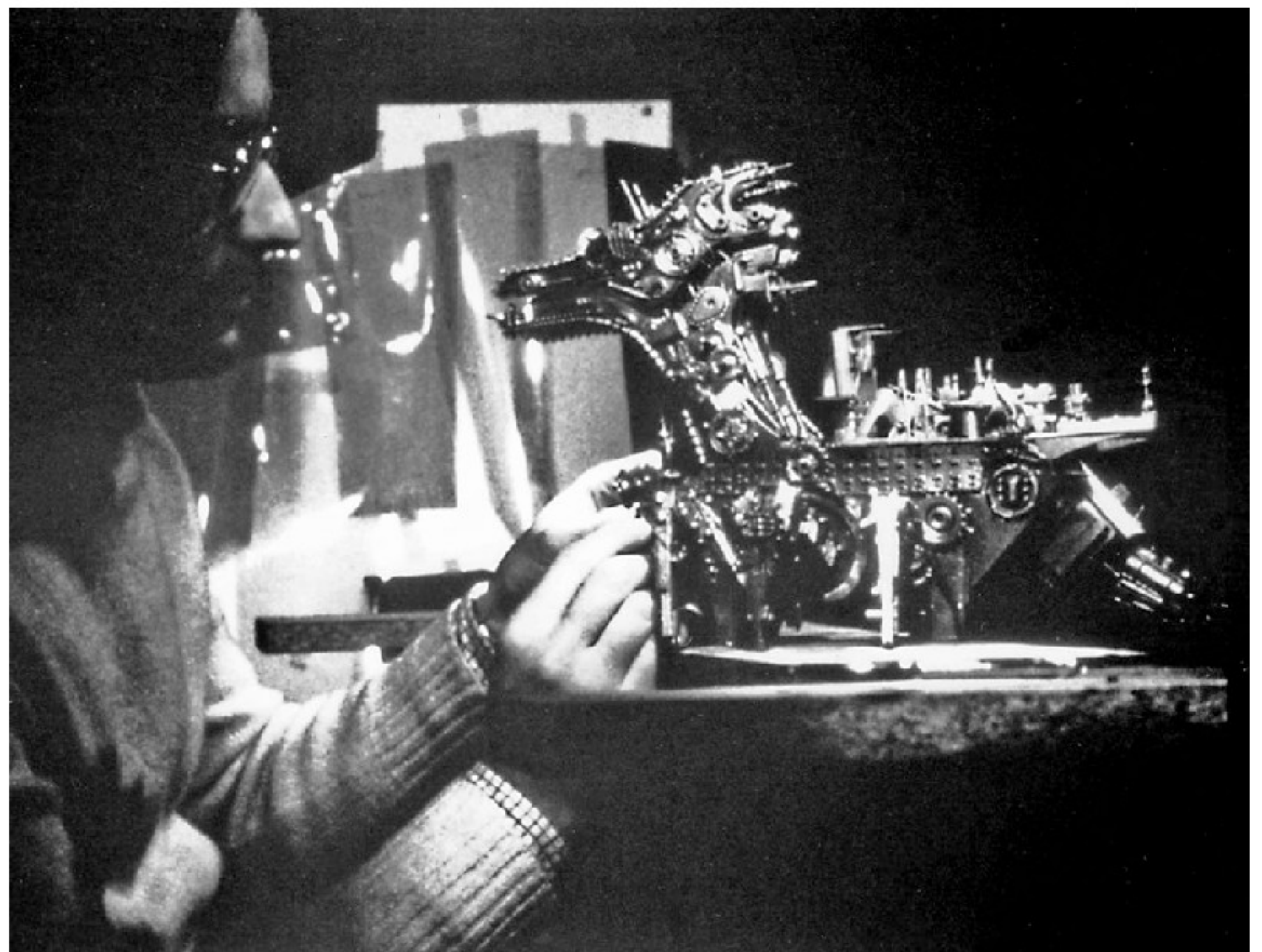
The ALIEN shuttlecraft flew the coop, so ALIENS used a model designed from stills in the ALIEN photo-novel.

men. "I'll never be a mother," she sobs. Simpson slowly begins to kiss Jessica's bloodied abdomen, to bury his face in her soft skin. "You like the taste of your own blood, don't you?" she sneers. "Well then, lick it!" He does so, until Jessica finds herself taking pleasure from it and pulls him away sharply by his hair. They stare at one another, as if attracted.

There is no discernible difference between the two versions of the anal intercourse scene; indeed, there is NO penetration shot (in the hardcore sense) in the uncut copy—just a mimic thrust, which appears intact in both. As for the title change, Barsky conjectured that AIP "probably didn't want the movie to sound like a soft core porn picture."

The question of the third edit—the removal of an entire, fairly innocuous scene (it involves no nudity and could be shown on network TV)—may be explained by the fact that this scene is the point of intermission in the Italian prints, the *fine* of *Primo atto*. It seems

probable that whoever transferred the film for AIP from its original two 1" reels inadvertently overlapped the two halves and lost the scene in the process.



...so was the original model working incognito as the Space Dragon in HERCULES (1983)? Animator Armando Valcauda begs to differ.

Wanna Buy a Good, Used Narcisaurus?

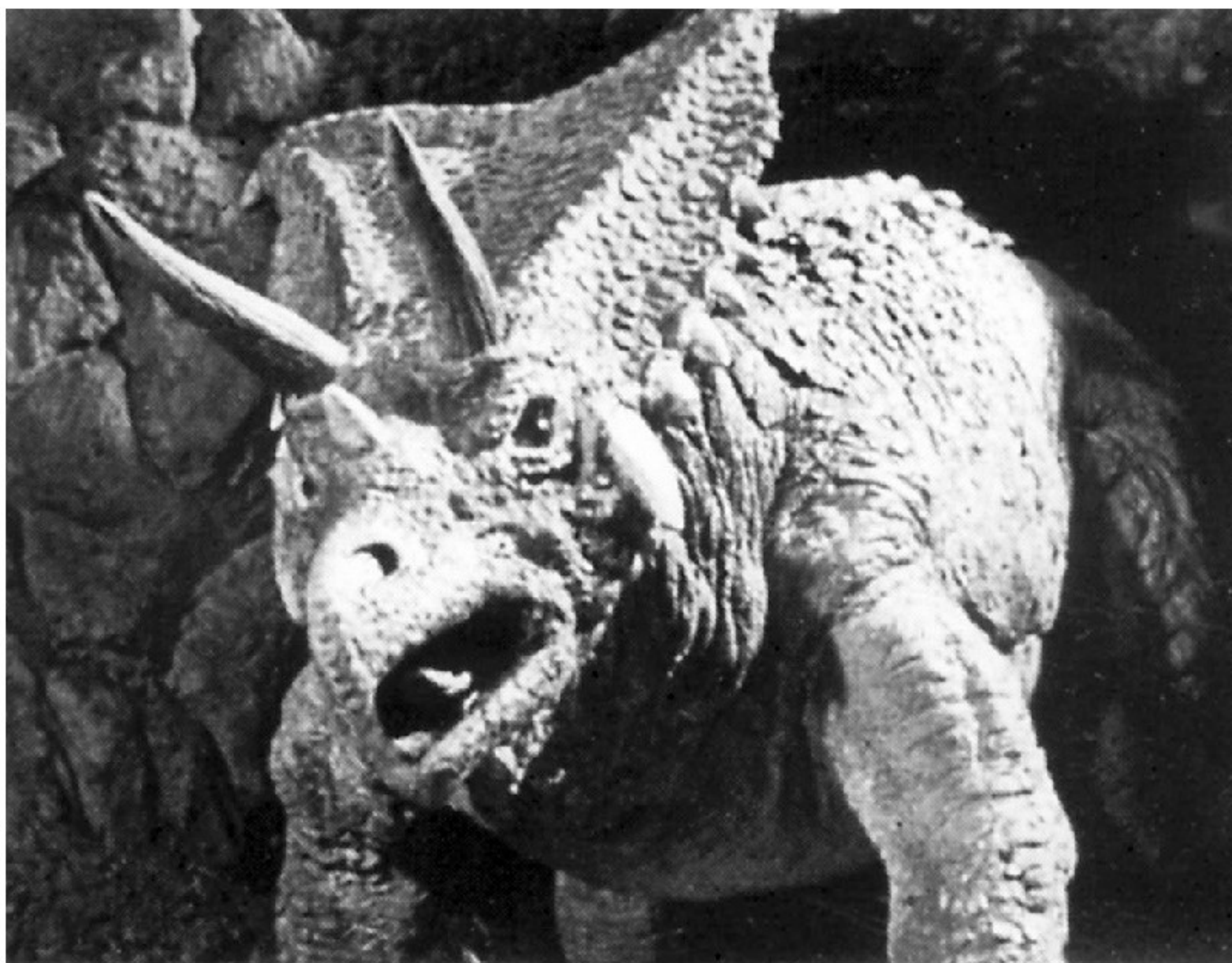
Legend has it that the special effects team for James Cameron's **ALIENS** (CBS/Fox, 1987) had to construct a new Narcissus—the Nostromo's escape shuttle, from which Sigourney Weaver is rescued from at the beginning of the movie—when nobody could remember what happened to the original model, built for Ridley Scott's **ALIEN** (CBS/Fox, 1979). As a friend of this column conjectured, might an explanation rest with MGM/UA's **HERCULES** (1983) with Lou Ferrigno, the cover art of which pictures the former Mr. Universe waging war against a curiously... familiar contraption? One good look verifies that the painting does indeed depict our friend, the Narcissus, newly enhanced with a big, ugly goose-neck and a set of mandibles shooting out the top! Did the Narcissus fly

off the Fox lot then, to work incognito in Italy? In a word, nah. A rental of the tape itself exonerated SPFX *maestro* Armando Valcauda who, commendably, animated only metallic miniatures of his own design. Evidently, the **ALIEN** folks just aren't as zealously protective of their designs as some other empires we could name.

Say, Who's Running These Clip Joints?

A clip from the Chasmasaur scene from Val Guest's **WHEN DINOSAURS RULED THE EARTH** (1970) with animation by Jim Danforth – was spotted last autumn in TV commercials for Media Home Entertainment's release, **SPEED ZONE** (a **CANNONBALL RUN** derivation starring Brooke Shields and Peter Boyle). The clip was unflatteringly used to illustrate the commercial's point of "Why rent a BAD movie... when you can rent a GOOD movie – **SPEED ZONE!**" (Justice followed on February 13, 1990, when **SPEED ZONE** was singled out by the critics on the Razzies' nomination board as one of the Worst Films of 1989.) Of course, **WDRTE** (a Warner Bros. theatrical release) is an *excellent* movie but Warner Home Video has yet to make it available on video for rental or purchase. The alternate music tracks that appear in the **WDRTE** clips in **DINOSAUR!** (Vestron) suggest this may be yet another instance of a movie being held up by the vagaries of music rights – in this case, the video rights to Mario Nascimbene's score.

We noticed a similar tactic being used in a commercial for MTV, in which someone is shown watching a Dan Vadis swordfight from Nick Nostro's **TRIUMPH OF**



*Jim Danforth's Chasmasaur was speechless to find himself in commercials for Media Home Entertainment's **SPEED ZONE** (from **WHEN DINOSAURS RULED THE EARTH**, 1970).*

THE TEN GLADIATORS [*Il trionfo dei deici gladiatori*, 1964] rightside up, while a ceiling-hugging hipster is shown enthralled by an upside-down set tuned to MTV. "There's TV, and then there's MTV," the announcer informs us.

Well, at least they got that right.

Coburned Again!

Speaking of video music rights...

One of the great, unsung fantasy films of the 1960's is Theodore J. Flicker's **THE PRESIDENT'S ANALYST** (1968), starring James Coburn. Perhaps it's unsung because so few people have seen the version they were intended to see. One of the first pre-ratings "Suggested for Mature Audiences" releases, the picture contained glimpses of female nudity and some bad language that would sound pretty mild by today's stan-

dards, but it had something even worse—a *philosophy*. A *counter-cultural* philosophy. As a result, the picture lost significant amounts of savagely satirical footage when released to NBC for its network airings, which has never been replaced. The movie's overdue release a couple of years ago on Paramount Home Video portended a restoration; it was not to be.

The Watchdog passed on renting Paramount's video at the time because the movie popped up simultaneously on The Movie Channel—obviously the same version as the video, right? Wrong. I've only now discovered that, unlike the version shown on cable (the same TV version we've always had, sans commercial breaks), the videocassette features the second most shocking use of re-recorded music I've ever seen on video, second only to Thorn/HBO's hideously re-scored **CONQUEROR WORM**.

In what is perhaps the movie's

*Two future stars of
SUSPIRIA – Udo Kier and
Stefania Casini – get
acquainted in Paul
Morrissey's BLOOD FOR
DRACULA (1973).*



most memorable scene, fugitive White House psychiatrist Coburn and flower child Jill Banner (remember her from **SPIDER BABY**?) make love in a wheat field, where their tryst is stalked by a series of foreign and domestic spies intent upon abducting or killing Coburn to obtain or destroy the secrets he knows about the President. What's great about the scene is that, given Coburn's character's paranoid frame-of-mind, all this encroaching predation *could* be purely imaginary. In its original form, the scene was scored with a live acoustic performance of an evocative, mantra-like ballad entitled "Inner Manipulations" by Barry ("Eve of Destruction") McGuire. It's one of those rare moments in movies where the viewer can sense that the moment was built around the song, not vice versa, and its removal by Paramount Video is worse than painful: it's devastating. The video excises several shots of McGuire – still present in surrounding footage – playing his guitar and singing on a mattress, and puts a new, non-descript wisp of music over reassembled footage of Coburn, Banner, and their observers. (Yep, that big spy in the shades seems to be

the late Joe Spinell.)

If anyone out there knows the whereabouts of an uncut video transfer of the original theatrical version of **THE PRESIDENT'S ANALYST**, please write. VIDEO WATCHDOG would love to provide a complete reconstruction in a future issue.

Count the Versions, If You Kier

ANDY WARHOL'S DRACULA (1973, directed by Paul Morrissey and Antonio Margheriti) – officially out-of-print from Video Gems since 1986 – has reappeared on AIR Video, one of those companies that retitle most everything they release [*a la* **CANNIBAL** (i.e., Ruggero Deodato's **THE LAST SURVIVOR/Ultimo mondo cannibale**, 1976) and **BLOOD MOON** (i.e., Leon Klimovsky's **THE WEREWOLF VS. THE VAMPIRE WOMAN/La Noche de Walpurgis**, 1970)].

So how does AIR's video stack up against the other versions in circulation? To begin with, it's

nicely packaged and priced – Barry Kaufman's Video Mania offers it for \$17.00. While the box asserts an R rating for the film, the print appears to be the complete and unedited version with the MPAA's X rating card at the top of the print! The tape's print and transfer quality leave something to be desired; the color is slightly faded, and many scenes are either too dark or too pale, while the opening credits are so indistinct as to be unreadable. The sound is occasionally warbly, a flaw particularly evident during moments dominated by Claudio Gizzi's wonderful score. Though imperfectly transferred from a less-than-crisp, 16mm master print, the Video Gems cassettes didn't share these problems.

By a cruel twist of fate, the best-looking domestic print of **ANDY WARHOL'S DRACULA** remains the heavily-cut edition distributed to Cable TV by Castle Hill Productions. Aired repeatedly by the USA Network, this gorgeous print features letterboxed credit sequences (bearing the title **BLOOD FOR DRACULA**) but deletes virtually all of the film's explicitly kinky charm, including Udo Kier's comedic retching scenes.

The film is also available on

Pony Video laserdisc in Japan (as is its companion piece, **FLESH FOR FRANKENSTEIN**, also '73). However, this impeccable, wide-screen, digitally-rerecorded transfer is marred by numerous, "digitized" erotic passages.

Retitlings

ACT OF VENGEANCE (Thorn-EMI/HBO Video) turns out to be **RAPE SQUAD**, a 1974 vigilante thriller directed by Bob Kelljan – of **COUNT YORGA**, **VAMPIRE** and **SCREAM**, **BLACULA**, **SCREAM** fame. A former actor (see **TWILIGHT ZONE**'s "The Jeopardy Room," 4/17/64) and the most talented of the young American directors slaving away in the thankless American International programmers of the early Seventies, Kelljan (whose real name "Robert Kelljchian" appears on the video box) died of a coronary in 1982. **RAPE SQUAD** was unofficially remade – by a pseudonymous director – as **THE LADIES' CLUB** (Media Home Entertainment) in 1984, which was not released until 1986.

BLOOD SHED (Regal Video) is a retitled, badly transferred edition of TransWorld Entertainment's **CRAZED**, which is also available from Genesis Video as **SLIPPING INTO DARKNESS**.

CLUB DEAD (Electric) is Bud Townsend's 1972 release **THE FOLKS AT RED WOLF INN**, which was later re-released as **TERROR AT RED WOLF INN** and **TERROR HOUSE**.

DON'T PANIC (Mogul) is Carlos Puerto's **Escalofrios** ("Chills and Fever," 1978), previously issued on All American Video under the title **SATAN'S BLOOD**. A fairly arresting, erotic thriller from Spain, it stars Angel Aranda (the young hero of Mario Bava's **PLANET OF THE VAMPIRES**) and complements its native title by

framing its most unnerving highlights with swelteringly humid-looking photography. Mogul's print, which runs 80 minutes, is minus a prologue reportedly included in Spanish prints (see **SHOCK XPRESS** 4) involving narration by a "famous Spanish investigator of occult phenomena."

BEYOND THE DOORS (Unicorn) is the long-overdue video release of the bizarre Larry Buchanan film **DOWN ON US** (1983), which proposes US government involvement in the deaths of Jimi Hendrix (Allen Chatman), Janis Joplin (Riba Meryl) and Jim Morrison (Brian Wolf).

THE GIRLS OF DON JUAN (Private Screenings) which features Jess Franco regular Anne Libert, is Jean-Francois Davy's 1973 **Prenez la Queue comme tout le Monde** ("Grab His Cock Like Everybody Else"!!). Hmmmm, why'd they change THAT one?

LEGEND OF BLOOD MOUNTAIN (Shock Video) is the same film previously released by Camp Video as **BLOOD DEMON** (not to be confused with **THE TORTURE CHAMBER OF DR. SADISM** [*Die Schlangengrube und das Pendel*, 1967], with Christopher Lee); the new release, which restores the original title of this 1965 Georgia-made production, is 14m longer than the Camp version. [Available from Michael Burgujian, 15-35 146th Place, Whitestone, NY 11357; it is also stocked for rental by Video Vault.]

OBSESSION: A TASTE FOR FEAR (Imperial Video Corp.)

is Piccio Raffanini's colorful 1988 *giallo*, **PATHOS**.

THE PASSION OF EVELYN (Private Screenings) is an erotic Italian horror film directed by Alfredo Rizzo, circa 1973, originally titled **La Sanguisuga conduce la danza** ("The Bloodsucker Leads the Dance"). It stars Giacomo Rossi-Stuart (doing his own dubbing, for a change!) and Femi Benussi; ironically, the plotline features neither vampires or dancing! You may remember director Rizzo as Italian character actor Alfred Rice, who played the taxi driver in William Wyler's **ROMAN HOLIDAY** (1953), the boorish striptease mogul in **THE PLAYGIRLS AND THE VAMPIRE** [*L'Ultima preda del Vampiro*, 1960], and a familiar face in a surreal traffic jam in Fellini's **TOBY DAMMIT** (1968). Rizzo and Benussi previously acted together in Ralph Zucker's unconscionably charming **BLOODY PIT OF HORROR** [*Il Boia Scarlatta*, 1965].

SAVAGE INTRUDER (Unicorn Video) is **HOLLYWOOD HORROR HOUSE**, a 1968 feature including appearances by nostalgic favorites Miriam Hopkins, Gale Sondergaard and Joe Besser.

SNIPER (Arena) is **THE DEADLY TOWER**, a riveting 1975 Made-for-TV recreation of Charles Whitman's August 1966 shooting spree from a tower at the University of Texas. Most people cite **ELVIS** as the point where Kurt Russell's acting career turned around. It started here. Directed by Jerry Jameson (**THE BAT PEOPLE**).



IMPERIAL'S STAGE FRIGHT, oddly enough, contains none of the music featured on the Simon Boswell soundtrack LP issued in Europe! However, one of its tracks does pop up in Imperial's **GHOST HOUSE** on a boom box!



THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE 2:
"Did you know that if you 'saw a metal plate in the dark – it makes a spark?"

Budget Label Releases

GOODTIMES VIDEO
401 5th Avenue
New York, NY 10016

These head honchos of the budget video market have finally issued some new titles after a year-long fallow period. Their latest releases – all Columbia acquisitions – include a two-volume cassette of the 1949 **BATMAN AND ROBIN** serial; Ray Harryhausen's marvelous **EARTH VS. THE FLYING SAUCERS**; and a color

print of **ATLAS IN THE LAND OF THE CYCLOPS** (Antonio Leonviola's *Maciste nella Terra dei Ciclopi*, 1961), a memorable peplum starring Gordon Mitchell and Chelo Alonso, which has heretofore been available only in a B&W print from Sinister Cinema.

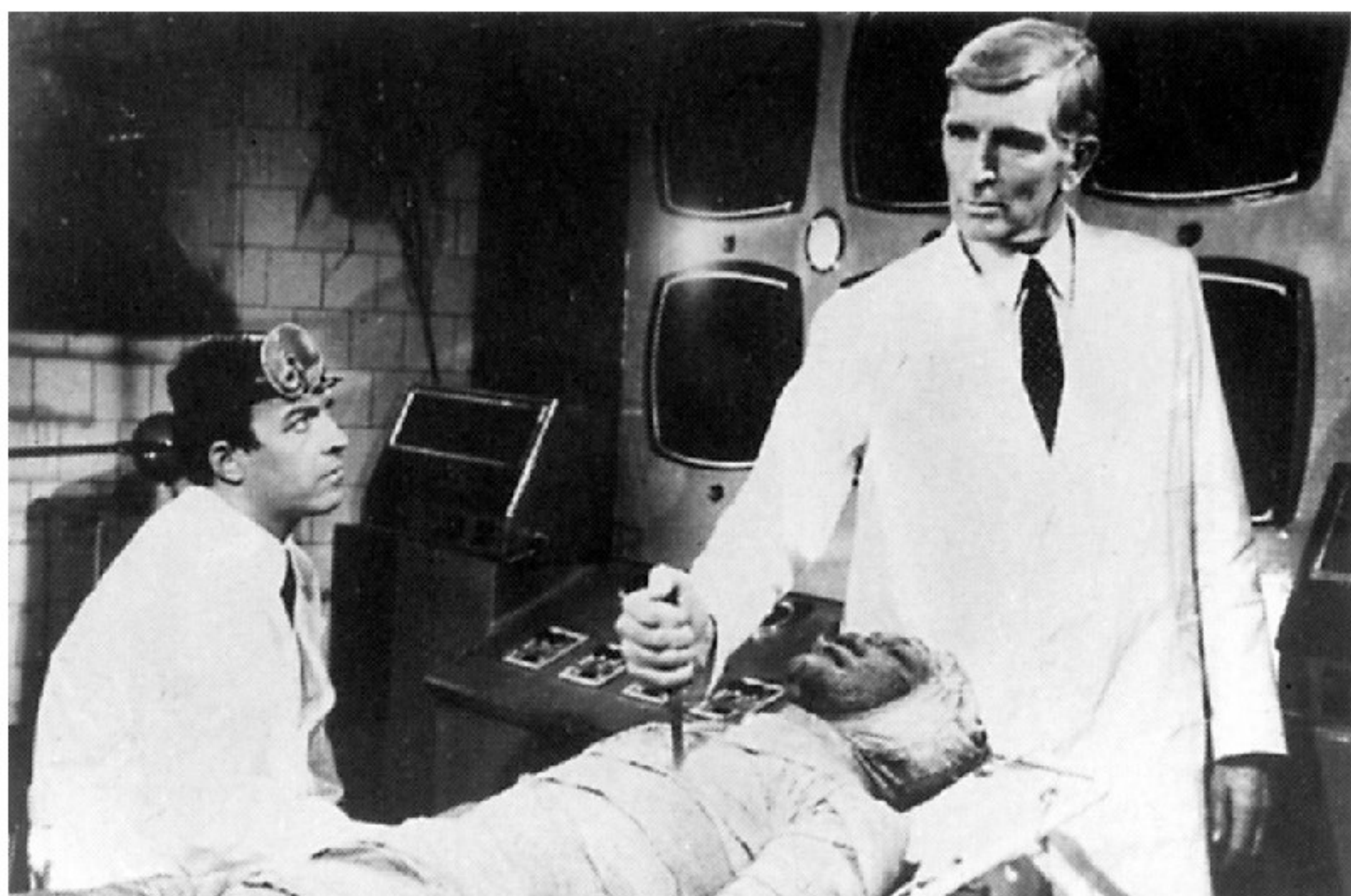
STARMAKER ENTERTAINMENT INC.
Eatontowne, NJ 07724

A new player in the budget video market, Starmaker released

in the last quarter of 1989 EP/SLP recordings of Amicus' **TALES FROM THE CRYPT** (1972), Ken Wiederhorn's underrated **SHOCK WAVES** (1977, with Peter Cushing, John Carradine and Brooke Adams), and the 1978 Japanese animated feature **THE LITTLE MERMAID**.

Unfortunately, each of these recordings shares a similar inability to track cleanly; distortion lines are always visible at either the top or bottom of the screen.

Michael Rennie demonstrates Ummites surgical techniques on the Mummy (Gene Reyes) in DRACULA VS. FRANKENSTEIN (1969).



The French poster for Aured's CURSE OF THE DEVIL, by acclaimed Spanish artist Jano.

UNITED AMERICAN HOME VIDEO

P.O. Box 7647

Charlotte, NC 28241

This new budget label has been scoring high with some impressive releases, including two rare, Paul Naschy titles – Carlos Aured's **CURSE OF THE DEVIL** [*El Retorno de Walpurgis*, 1973] and Tulio Demichelli's **DRACULA VS. FRANKENSTEIN** [aka **ASSIGNMENT TERROR**, *El Hombre que Vino de Ummo* ("The Man Who Came from Ummo"), 1969], which includes the film's original, pre-AIP-TV syndication, credits sequence – but that's only the tip of the iceberg. Two other, particularly worthy titles available from United American are John Gilling's **MANIA** (aka **THE FLESH & THE FIENDS**, 1960) and Willard Huyck's underrated **MESSIAH OF EVIL** (1974).

The company seems to issue all their releases in the classy SP Mode with attractive packaging. Write for their catalogue of more than 500 titles.

In addition to their budget tapes, United American was the company selected by Dennis Hopper to release his bizarre **THE LAST MOVIE** (1970), which spearheads their non-budget division, retailing at \$73.95.

VIDEO TREASURES

c/o Video Cassette Sales, Inc.

270 Oser Avenue

Hauppauge, NY 11788

Among their latest releases are EP/SLP editions of Tobe Hooper's **THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE 2**, James Foley's



harrowing **AT CLOSE RANGE** (1986), and David Winters' **THE LAST HORROR FILM** (with Caroline Munro and Joe Spinell). While picture quality and tracking on these cassettes is acceptable, be advised that each of them – judging from several copies we audited – suffer from poor, extremely muffled sound. In some cases this may have something to do with the originals' stereo soundtracks, which has not been preserved for these budget releases. [Video Treasures' tapes of

the original **TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE** sound just fine.]

As on its original Media Home Entertainment release, the box for **MASSACRE 2** claims that the video is Closed Captioned for the Hearing Impaired. Can anyone out there tell us if this bonus remains intact on VT's six-hour-speed edition? Can you imagine the closed-captioning on the last half-hour? "PT-PT-PAH-RRRRRRRRRRRRRR!" "Lefty, heyyyyy!lllllp, Lefty!" "RRRRRRRRRRR gggggggg RRRR!" "Aaaaaaargh!" Unbelievable.

Lasers on Stun

Michael Lennick



THINK IT'S THAT ENDLESS conversation with the video clerks that makes me lose the will to breed: "It won't track... there's a huge crease about two minutes in...

somebody got epoxy all over the tape guides... the Macrovision made my monitor explode..." Does it really matter what the complaint is, when the stock answer (after the obligatory why-do-I-need-this-today stare) is usually a variation on "Gee, nobody else complained about it... whaddya mean by 'track'?"

Working filmmakers (which I am) and serious video collectors (aren't we all?) share many things in common, not the least of which is a quest for perfection – both output and input; if not in substance, then in form. Both struggles can be summed up by something Charles Beaumont once said about Hollywood: "Attaining success [here] is like climbing a gigantic mountain of horse manure in order to pluck the one perfect rose from the top. Should you survive the ascent, you're likely to find you've lost your sense of smell."

My video collection got jump-started back when I began working in the field, mainly because I had access to both 35mm prints and storage equipment. My earliest titles were on big reels of 1" open-reel videotape. I've still got most of them and an ancient IVC 870 VTR to play them on. It's 20 years old, needs two fans aimed at it, sounds like a cement mixer with an attitude problem, and still makes great pictures. (Should any of the tape guides slip out of alignment, the factory-recommended repair tool is a large wooden mallet. Really.) This is obviously not the ideal playback situation, but it served me well into the dawning of the home video epoch, at which time it was joined by a series of Betamaxii, the inevitable (and very recent) VHS and – the flagship of my menagerie – the laserdisc player. I'm currently on my fourth Pioneer.

I've been spinning laserdiscs since 1979. For a long time, the trick was to *get* discs up here in Toronto, as Pioneer didn't think there was a viable Canadian market for the format until late 1987. Having circumvented that obstacle (mostly by traveling south a lot), the next problem became getting quality software able to match the capabilities of the hardware. For a long time, laser technology would happily pump out images

that were more glorious than NTSC deserved, but could only do it with pre-released film transfers originally designed for home videotape – you know, that *Magnetic Video* look. You know what I'm talking about if you've ever seen, say, MGM's disc of **FORBIDDEN PLANET**. Yes, it was the only way you could hear it in stereo for a couple of years, but the video end was smeary and laggy. Was this thing shot off an old 16mm print? With a camcorder? Off a *wall*? Insult was added to injury when the side change was placed in the middle of a line of dialogue. Walter Pidgeon's, no less.

Then the sky cleared.

The fix came from left field, from Santa Monica, actually, and a company called Voyager Press. Their "Criterion" line of high quality laserdiscs is the answer to any videophile's fantasies, and is truly as good as NTSC gets. The stuff is mostly transferred via flying-



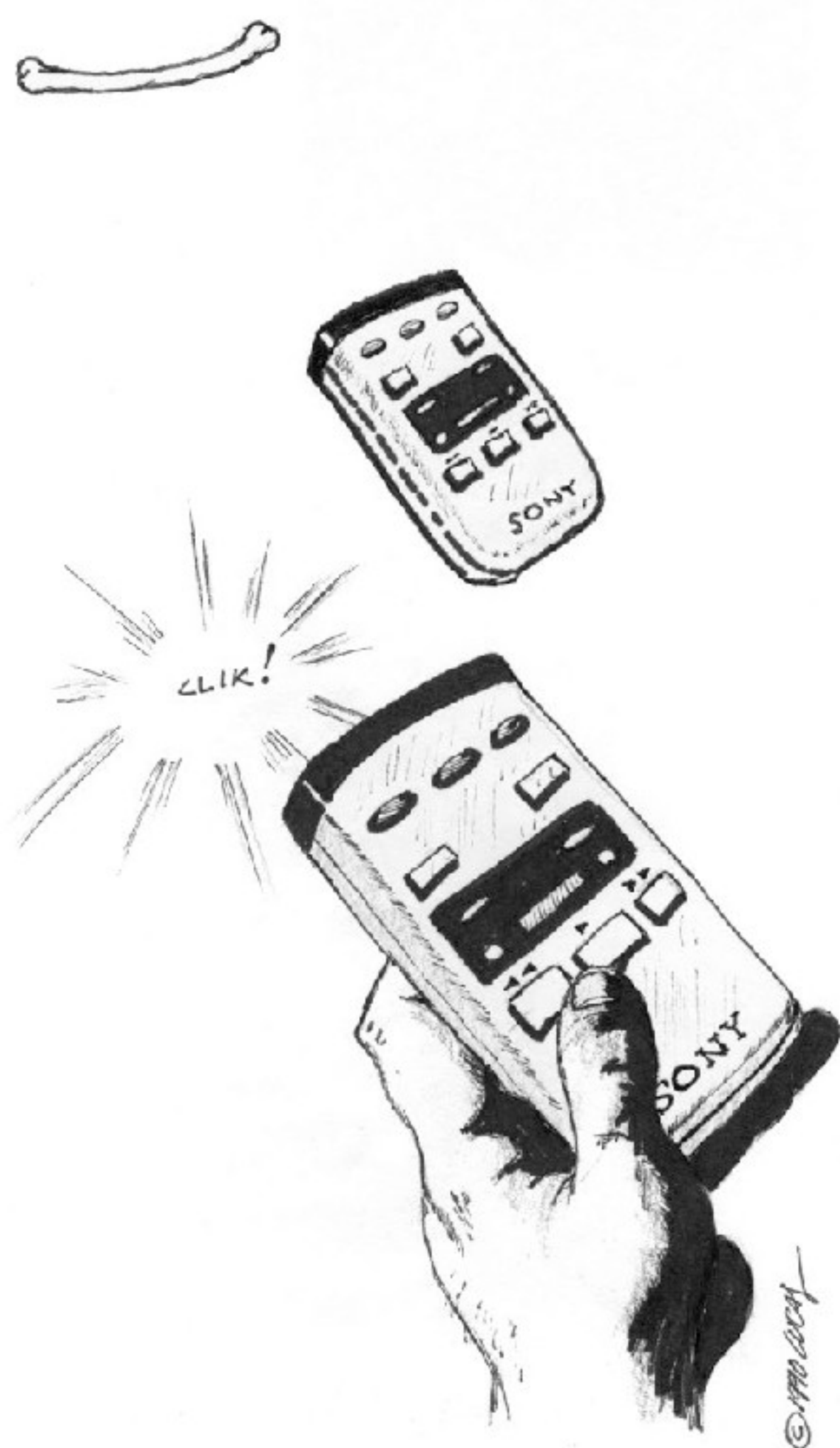
spot scanner from internegs [the intermediary negatives from which 35mm release prints are struck]. All their widescreen prints are letterboxed, all subtitles are tucked away in the lower black band, and most disc sets come with a supplemental goody package that's often worth the price of admission all by itself – promotional materials, behind-the-scenes shorts, audition clips, you name it. Criterion's **FORBIDDEN PLANET** supplement includes scenes omitted from the original film. Their disc of **THE GRADUATE** offers screen tests of Tony Bill and others, suggesting what a truly god-awful movie might have resulted from less-assured control and too much studio interference. The programmability of the format is left in the viewer's hands, allowing for the inclusion of interviews and running commentary on accessible tracks, to be savored or ignored at your leisure. Criterion's upcoming release

of **CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND** – overseen by CINEFEX's Don Shay, no less – promises to provide us with *both* the original 1977 release *and* the rather jumpy 1980 recut, waiting to be selected according to our whim and programming zeal. Their **LAWRENCE OF ARABIA** must be seen to be felt.

In many cases, Criterion have called on the film's original director to oversee their transfer. Kubrick did it for **2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY** and the result is so clean that... Remember the scene on the moon with the astronauts in the foreground doing something scientific while, far in the background, Dr. Floyd's shuttle descends to Clavius Base? Well, that's a Doug and Don Trumbull front projection screen those guys are standing in front of. The *first*, in fact. The lunar background, the descending lunar bus, they're all projected from beside the camera onto a remarkably reflective screen – as was the African veldt footage during "The Dawn of Man." In Criterion's disc, you can actually see the halation (haloes) around the helmets of the astronauts, caused by the screen. I've worked with a lot of front projection and am familiar with the phenomenon, but it's really very subtle. When I was growing up, I lived a few blocks from the Glendale Theatre, where **2001** had the lengthiest Cinerama run anywhere in its initial release: three years. I was there every weekend but, in the intervening years, I'd come to believe I had hallucinated that damned halation. It's comforting to have it back. (By the way, the Glendale Theatre closed after that run, a fitting end to a 50 year history. It subsequently became Glendale Ford – the dealership, not the actor – and is currently enjoying life as Glendale Hyundai.)

Criterion's catalogue has lately become far too extensive to list adequately here. Their fine products should be available via the more literate video stores, though at deservedly higher prices than the normal fare. If the only dealer in your neighborhood refuses to stock them (as many do – the pricing and letterboxing scares them off), try threats; they've worked up here. If that fails, Criterion has a mail-order service. They're user-friendly, and they're sitting on the best hope we've currently got – at least until we have to dump and repurchase the whole bloody load in HDTV.

For information about the Criterion collection, write The Voyager Company at 1351 Pacific Coast Highway, Santa Monica CA 90401, or call them at (213) 451-1383.



Venezuelan Video Safari – Miami Style!

A Tale of Video Valor

Craig Ledbetter



My friend Tom Weisser had been urging me for months to fly down to Miami, Florida, so that we could scout rare tapes together at the (more than 50) video stores he belongs to. As a veteran Euro-Trash collector, I was skeptical. With more than 1500 European rarities already in my possession, what could I possibly discover in Miami?

In a nutshell, tapes from Venezuela.

To European horror fanatics, there's nothing like Venezuelan tapes. Long before anyone else had them, the shelves in Miami held uncut copies of Lucio Fulci's **THE GATES OF HELL**, **THE BEYOND** (aka **7 DOORS OF DEATH**), **THE HOUSE BY THE CEMETERY**, **THE NEW YORK RIPPER**, Joe D'Amato's **ANTHROPOPHAGOUS** (aka **THE GRIM REAPER**), Sergio Martino's **MOUNTAIN OF THE CANNIBAL GOD** (aka **SLAVE OF THE CANNIBAL GOD**) and Antonio Margheriti's **CANNIBAL APOCALYPSE** (a cut – but still longer – version of **INVASION OF THE FLESH HUNTERS**). If you're into Spaghetti westerns, epics, 60's spy films or Mafia flicks, these too are in abundance – usually in English, with Spanish subtitles.

The round trip from Houston, Texas, was less than three hundred dollars, and I had a place to stay. Also, I felt like taking a gamble; I'd spent at least that much money getting NTSC conversions made of PAL tapes of things it turned out I already had. Okay, Continental Airlines, count me in: it's only money.

In the course of that weekend, Tom and I made it to only 15 of those 50 stores, but I'm still in shock over what we found, not only for the quantity but the quality of selection as well. Miami is actually composed of several suburbs, like Kendall and Hialeah (known locally as "Little Havana"). To reach all of their video stores, you have to cover one hell of a lot of territory.



*Venezuelan lesson #1: This is the box for Giulio Questi's **PLUCKED**.*

You also have to knock for a long time on the doors of places that look closed. My host took me to places located at the seedier outskirts of town, telling me that, as long as we kept our heads down and mouths shut, nobody would bother us.

The night before my departure, Tim Lucas reminded me to keep an eye peeled for Jesús Franco films – particularly for his notorious AIDS exploitation film [**SIDA, La Peste del Siglo XX**, "AIDS, the Plague of the 20th Century," 1986], which we'd heard was floating around. The first store Weisser and I visited was a place we discovered on the way somewhere else.

Almost the first thing I saw was a plain white video box with hand-stencilled credits. Could I believe my eyes? **AIDS: THE PLAGUE OF HUMANITY**, starring Lina Foster? Directed by James Gardner?

"Tom," I exclaimed, "we've hit the motherlode!"

Finding it was easy; the trick was getting the damn thing out of the store. Tom wasn't a member and becoming a member of any Venezuelan video store isn't easy if you live more than ten blocks away. At the very least, they ask you for three *personal* references with phone numbers! One place wanted his car registration! Finally, just after Tom earned my eternal friendship by offering the cashier a crisp \$100 bill as a deposit on the tape, the owner's daughter came in and recognized Tom as someone she'd worked with in the Miami music business! We got out of there with the tape and the \$100 bill, but **AIDS: THE PLAGUE OF HUMANITY** turned out to be some lousy, American, shot-on-video documentary!

This was worse than disappointing, but another mysterious discovery from the same day – **JAILHOUSE WARDRESS** – helped to make up for it, being credited to "Allan Steeve" [a Eurociné house pseudonym, used by Julio Perez Tabernero for **CANNIBAL TERROR**, 1981] and filmed with the same cast and sets as Franco's **BARBED WIRE DOLLS** [*Frauen-gefangnis*, 1975]¹!

A few words about Venezuelan video jackets: the

box for **JAILHOUSE WARDRESS** features air-brushed artwork of a young woman wearing panties only, shown from behind, her hands tied above her head. Over the course of that weekend, I saw this art reproduced on literally dozens of different Venezuelan videos, as if it was some universal bar-code of sleaze! It figured on women-in-prison pictures, Mafia movies, even horror films. On the box for Sergio Bergonzelli's *Mansion Sangriamente* [aka **IN THE FOLDS OF THE FLESH**, 1972], additional streams of blood were painted down her back. After awhile, it got to be comical. Another memorable video box listed credits from an obscure Italian horror film under a nonsensical Spanish title, while the back cover featured stills (supposedly scenes from the video) from **ULYSSES, TIME BANDITS** and **SWAMP THING!** When we got this mutt home, it turned out to be **GHOSTKEEPER**, an 80's American

horror pooper with Dorothy McGuire!

Even when you miraculously succeed in getting the film you thought you rented, Venezuelan videos are notorious for their poor transfer quality. The majority of the tapes I found were recorded at the LP (4-hour) speed, while a few crept along in EP/SLP (6-hour) mode. Dropouts are also common but, if you want to see Carlos Aured's *Apocalypsis sexual* (one of only two films Lina Romay made without Jess Franco – yes,



1. Since Craig completed his article, we've been able (with the assistance of Lucas Balbo) to identify **JAILHOUSE WARDRESS** as *Un paradis pour les brutes, un enfer pour les femmes* ["A Paradise for Brutal Men, A Hell for Women" 1977]. The director was probably Julio Perez Tabernero. One of Eurocine's notorious composite features, the film mixes new footage of Nadine Pascal, Pamela Stanford and Ronald Weiss with at least 40 minutes of **redubbed** excerpts from Franco's **BARBED WIRE DOLLS**! Paul Muller and Lina Romay – who appear in much of the latter footage – do not receive screen credit, nor does Weiss (who

figures prominently in the new "story"). The bright blue prison uniforms worn by Pascal and Stanford do not at all match those seen in the **BWD** excerpts. Monica Swinn stars as the "wardress" – a performance culled entirely from reworded scenes from **BWD** – and, to confound matters further, the first minute of the picture is lifted from "James Gartner"/Alain Payet's **HELLTRAIN** [*Train Special pour Hitler*, 1976], featuring Swinn in a **second** role as a beaky blonde chanteuse. Eurociné disavows all knowledge of the film by crediting the production to "Variety TVC."

A hell for archivists, a paradise for Eurocinéastes!

I found that too!), I guess it comes with the territory. They're in NTSC, man, and that's all that matters.

Speaking of Franco, I found him well represented in Little Havana. At one of the first video stores we visited, Tom and I found something called **SEXY SAVAGE** (the title on the tape itself was **SEXY NATURE**), which turned out to be an Italian-language version of *La Comtesse perverse* ["The Perverse Countess," 1973], one of Franco's most polished efforts. I knew this because, about a month earlier, I'd spent \$45 converting a SECAM cassette to NTSC for my collection! We also found a Spanish-language tape of

It's like somebody gave acid to Jean-Luc Godard and said, "Go make us a horror movie."

Franco's **A VIRGIN AMONG THE LIVING DEAD**, which got our hopes up, because the US version on Wizard Video is such a butchered mess. Unfortunately, it was the same thing, with all of the violence and nudity missing.

Eurocine produces a lot of Franco films, but I think their non-Franco films can be just as much fun. Another Miami discovery – "James Gartner"/Alain Payet's **NATHALIE: ESCAPE FROM HELL**, starring Jack Taylor and Monica Swinn – starts out as an innocuous 40's war film but, halfway through, damn near every other scene features lesbian gropings or Ms. Swinn in a leather bikini, cracking a whip. Eurociné titles turned up all weekend. On the way back to the Miami airport, we stopped off at a video store along the way and found "James Gardner"/Guy Gibert's *La Marque de Zorro* ["The Mark of Zorro," 1975] with HOWARD VERNON! It turned out to be a tape of **THE SHADOW OF ZORRO** (1965) – also with Howard Vernon!

Miami also offers incredible discoveries that aren't of Venezuelan origin, as their video stores also carry many obscure US releases. The long-defunct World Wide Video, for example, was apparently a fringe label specializing in Italian and French spy spoofs of the 60's. Among the six World Wide titles we found, two were particularly significant discoveries. Judging from its title and the artwork on its box – a bloody scythe slicing through a wagon loaded down with hay – **MEXICAN**

SLAY RIDE promised to be a taco terror heavy on the salsa. It was actually Riccardo Freda's *Coplan ouvre le feu à Mexico* ["Coplan Sets Mexico Ablaze," 1967], starring Lang Jeffries, while **SUPERSPY** (which the box claimed starred Lino Ventura) turned out to be Freda's other "Coplan" film, **THE EXTERMINATORS** [*Coplan, Secret Agent FX18*, 1966] with Richard Wyler!

And the Freda goldmine didn't end there. I've owned a Spanish-language version of "Willy Pareto"/Freda's **THE IGUANA WITH A TONGUE OF FIRE** [*L'Iguana della lingua di fuoco*, 1977] for a couple of years, but it's cut and watching it hasn't taught me much Spanish. I've known that an uncut, English version was out on Venezuelan video ever since seeing an explicit trailer for it on another Venezuelan import. I'd been asking Mr. Weisser to dig one up for months, but he insisted it wasn't around. Well, of the 15 stores we visited, almost half of them had **IGUANA**. In fairness to Tom, though, it's easy to see how one could get lost in the bounty of titles and similar packagings (not to mention burned by the constant probability of renting the wrong thing), and quickly fail to see things that are staring you right in the face. Still, whenever **IGUANA** turned up, I couldn't help rubbing it in a bit.

I was also surprised to find Joe D'Amato's **PRISON DANCER** (the direction credited to one of Joe's pseudonyms, "Peter Newton"), a title which D'Amato filmographies claim was never finished. TransWorld Entertainment owns the rights to this film and, though they announced its release a couple of years back, it never quite materialized. I was as excited to find this supposedly non-existent film as I was curious to discover who eventually finished it. Unfortunately, the tape inside was a completely unrelated piece of American junk! I'm still chuckling over the music credit on the box. "Jackson Blue" sounds like Jackson Browne's evil twin.

What else floated by? Andre Hunebelle's **FANTOMAS** and **FANTOMAS VS. SCOTLAND YARD** (both 1965); Michele Lupo's **WEEKEND MURDERS**; Mario Bava's original **LISA AND THE DEVIL** (1973); Miguel Skaife's *El Asesino de la Muneca* ["The Doll Killer," 1974], with Helga Line; **WHEN WOMEN PLAYED DING DONG** (no kidding!); **SUMMERTIME KILLER** with Karl Malden and Chris Mitchum; Eugenio Martin's *Aquella Casa en las Afueras* ["That House on the Outskirts," 1980]; **TRHAUHMA** (?????); **OPERATION: MANTIS** (Paul Naschy!); Jose Maria Forque's *Tarot* [aka **ANGEL-LA, GAME OF MURDER** (1973), starring Fernando Rey and Gloria Grahame – formerly released here by All Seasons Video as **AUTOPSY**]; **SIGMA COMMANDO** (an early spy feature starring Jack Taylor); Antonio Margheriti's 4-hour **TREASURE ISLAND IN**

OUTER SPACE (1987, made for Italian TV); Luigi Cozzi's **THE KILLER STRIKES AGAIN** [*L'Assassino contratto uccide ancora*, 1982] and Bruno Mattei's **SS EXTERMINATOR CAMP** (with Lorraine DeSelle of **TRAP THEM & KILL THEM** fame).

But what, you might ask, was the biggest catch I bagged on my Venezuelan video safari? Well, against all odds, I found a title I saw for the first and only time over 15 years ago on a drunken college weekend, something I honestly figured I would never see again, if it ever existed at all. When I first saw this movie through my happy haze in the early Seventies, I was still in my infancy as an obsessive Euro-Trash fanatic but now, after seeing the film again (patience, I'll get to it!), I can't help but think it was directly responsible for my later state of mind.

There, in one of those crazy Miami video stores, sat a typical Venezuelan video box: obscure Spanish title, non-descript artwork but – *BEHOLD!* The actors listed on the jacket were Gina Lollobrigida and Jean-Louis Trintignant, the same stars featured in this quasi-mythological, Italian Grail from my dim past. Could this really be it? Could I trust my eyes? ("Could I trust the box?" was more like it!) Sure enough, the fateful film I saw under the title **PLUCKED** was again before me, under the title **DEATH LAID AN EGG**. The film also features Ewa (**CANDY**) Aulin, and was directed by

Giulio Questi (and if you've seen his kinky western **DJANGO, KILL!**, you know this man has some *strange* obsessions!). It has a conventional plot – a man and his mistress devise a scheme to kill his wife and inherit her millions – but viewing **PLUCKED** is anything but a conventional experience. It's like somebody gave acid to Jean-Luc Godard and said, "Go make us a horror movie." One of the sub-plots involves the breeding of headless, wingless chickens for food! This isn't the place to discuss the film in greater detail, but I guarantee that, if it were ever discovered by the fans, **PLUCKED/DEATH LAID AN EGG** would replace **PLAN NINE FROM OUTER SPACE** and **BLOOD FREAK** on more than a few folks' Best of the Worst lists.

Since I've come back from my Venezuelan video safari, a few people have listened to my stories and tried to tell me about some long-lost movie they'd love to find, something that *isn't* available on video, that probably doesn't exist anywhere.

I always tell them, "It's in Miami – we just didn't find it."

AUTHOR'S NOTE:

I am indebted to the hospitality (and blank tape supply) of Tom Weisser during my stay in Miami, without which this article would not have been possible.



How to Read a Franco Film



Photos courtesy Lucas Balbo/Nostalgia Archives

Tim Lucas



IN THE SUMMER OF 1988 I decided I did not know enough about the films of Jesús “Jess” Franco and undertook a lengthy critical article as an excuse to learn.

Prior to the advent of home video, such an ambitious undertaking would have been impossible; those few titles lucky enough to have won American theatrical distribution promptly disappeared, only the least representative of which – **THE CASTLE OF FU MAN-CHU** (1968), for example – were ever revived for TV playdates. Things finally began to change when a number of small video companies satisfied their early, indiscriminate needs for exploitation product with what (at first glance) seemed to be Franco movies. Many of them weren’t; some could boast only of his marginal involvement; those that were absolutely his, formed

only the tip of the volcano. Any sane person would have been daunted; I simply dug in my heels for the long haul.

My initial exposure to these often pseudonymous films was, as seems to be the case with most viewers, not particularly agreeable. Most of the films looked tatty by the standards to which even low-budget American horror films had made me accustomed and, to my TV-conditioned senses, often seemed excruciatingly slow. My investigative spirit, however, was piqued by my discovery that the worst of these offenders – **ZOMBIE LAKE**, **HELLTRAIN** and **FRAULEIN DEVIL** – turned out to *not* be Franco films, after all (they were respectively the mislabelled work of Jean Rollin, Alain Payet and Patrice Rondard). It’s easy to become confused by the production credits of Eurociné releases, as one eventually learns that “A.L.

VW DIRECTROSPECTIVE

Mariaux" – a pseudonym used by Franco on several scripts – is actually a Eurociné pseudonym derived from the name of its mogul, Marius Lesoeur.

As thick as things got, I was encouraged to persist in my machete swipes against Franco's jungling identities and deceptive filmographies by the willingness of most video companies to send me free screening cassettes (reducing expenses which would otherwise have made the cost of research prohibitive). More importantly, I felt I was being given, along with the bad, a teasing minimum of aesthetic sustenance by such exceptional films as **THE DIABOLICAL DR. Z** [*Miss Muerte*, 1965], **VENUS IN FURS** (1969) and **EROTIKILL** [*La Comtesse Noire*, 1973]. These rewards got me through the worst of it.

To everyone's surprise, my article – which evolved into a three-part videography – was accepted for publication by FANGORIA and appeared in issues #78 and 79 and GOREZONE #5. There was an element of compromise about the final installment, which had to be passed off as one of my "Video Watchdog" columns, but it remains the only three-part article they've presented in their ten-year history and, editorially, I think perhaps their bravest moment. I worried at the time that my enthusiasm for these films might compromise whatever critical veracity I had established in nearly twenty years as a film journalist but, to the contrary, I received more correspondence (and from more knowledgeable correspondents) in response to my Franco coverage than to anything else I've written. In the time since my articles appeared (which were limited to only 30 domestically available titles) not only have I *not* stopped watching Franco's films, I've managed to screen more than 50(!) *additional* Franco titles, including several variant editions from other countries. I'm well past that point where vague curiosity becomes a quixotic quest.

Opposite: Jess Franco, the imp of the perverse, cameos as "Dr. Seward" in *SHINING SEX* (1975).

Several key Franco works – **SUCCUBUS** [*Necronomicon*, 1967], to name one – I was able to obtain only after my articles had appeared, and then only from bootleg sources. After delighting in these, when I had seen perhaps twice as many films as I'd originally screened for my articles, I remember hitting an ornery patch of bad luck titles that threatened to dispel my interest altogether with their seeming lameness and sameness. Perhaps it was exhaustion, or the realization

that, even after viewing the five or six new acquisitions lining my living room mantle, I would only have 70 more to find, convert at great expense to NTSC, and watch. And watch again. But, without fail, a new tape always arrived just in time to reassure me that I hadn't depleted this particular vein of its riches, and to cast a providential glow on those disappointments I'd had. Each new tape made available information I should have had *before* making those earlier acquaintances but

hadn't, because of the way tapes necessarily have of popping up unchronologically, making even the least of those duds seem more magical and me more ignorant.

From my present vantage, I'm beginning to see that something else entirely was going on. In the case of Franco's best films, it isn't that these films are so exceptional in themselves – indeed, any one of them might seem just as disorienting or discouraging as any random selection to the Uninitiated – but rather that their maker's language at some indistinct moment begins to sink in, after one has seen a certain number of them, and this soft, persuasive language coalesces in some films more tangibly, more audibly, more obsessively, than in others.



One of the most time-consuming things to figure out about the long and winding road of Franco's career – and the *first* thing necessary to know – is that it follows a precise narrative pattern of its own, most unlike the haphazard and meaningless overview one perceives from the unevenly balanced list of titles released in America. Franco's *oeuvre* actually breaks down into a neat arrangement of periods.



The First Period (1959-64)

This period covers those films produced between his first feature, *Tenemos dieciocho años* ("We are Now 18," 1959) and his final monochromatic feature, **THE DIABOLICAL DR. Z**, including the acclaimed **THE AWFUL DR. ORLOFF** [*Gritos en la Noche*, 1962]. A dozen features fall within this period, which may seem to some a bafflingly deliberate and stylish period. The films – many of which were co-produced by Marius Lesoeur's (then) Eurocinéac company – are tasteful, classically filmed and teeming with good music. In essence, we see behind them a filmmaker who knew how to work economically and well, who storyboarded meticulously and approached his films with the care of a man overjoyed to be realizing his dreams. Even the misfires of this period – like **DR. ORLOFF'S MONSTER** [*El Secreto del Doctor Orloff*, 1964] – are fascinating.

A promising career is begun.

The Second Period (1965-67)

Beginning with his first color film, **ATTACK OF THE ROBOTS** [*Cartes sur la Table*, 1965]¹ and resolving in the aforementioned **SUCCUBUS**, this phase finds Franco discovering himself as an artist while being buffeted about by the phenomenon of the psychedelic Sixties. The free-wheeling, dark-edged satire of **ATTACK** and its simultaneously-filmed sequel – **Residencia para Espias** ("Boarding School for Spies," 1966) – culminate in the wonderfully clever Pop Art send-up, **LUCKY THE INSCRUTABLE** [*Lucky el Intrepido*, 1967]. This was followed by the delirious "Aquila Trilogy" of **SADISTEROTICA** [*La Casa de las dos Bellezas*], **KISS ME MONSTER** [*Besame Monstruo*] and **SUCCUBUS** (all 1967), produced in West Germany by Adrian Hoven. According to actor Michel Lemoine, Franco shot extra scenes for **ATTACK** and **RESIDENCIA** for Hesperia Productions during the filming of **SUCCUBUS** (at Aquila Film's ex-

Opposite: Abductee Maria Silva sheds her skin for science in THE AWFUL DR. ORLOFF (1962).

pense!), explaining to his confused cast that these extra shots naturally didn't come from the script, and naturally didn't seem to belong, because they were making a very dream-like film!²

Unlike most of the films that tried to capture this decade's fleeting cultural explosion on film, Franco's psychedelia still looks fresh today and represents some of his most vibrant work. If not Franco's most important period, it is his most telling, which makes it all the more frustrating that none of its films are currently available on video in the United States.³

The Harry Alan Towers Period (1968-70)

This is easily Franco's best documented period, shaped by nine American co-productions made for British producer Towers. Many good films hail from this era, in which Franco's budgets ballooned and the movies featured such familiar faces as Christopher Lee, Jack Palance, Klaus Kinski, George Sanders and Herbert Lom. However, the films themselves lost more in identity than they gained in stature.

During the production of **DEADLY SANCTUARY** [*Justine*, 1968], Franco and Towers were arrested by Spanish authorities for filming "obscene" situations; the incident not only relocated the production, it prompted Franco to embark on a long exile from his Madrid homebase. The period reached its creative nadir with two "Fu Manchu" sequels starring Lee, its peak with the uncanny **VENUS IN FURS**, and its apotheosis with the ambitious but empty **COUNT DRACULA** [*El Conde Dracula*, 1970] – which drew the Franco-Towers partnership to a mutually beneficial close.

The Peak Years (1970-1978)

Having parted with Towers, Franco embarked on a footloose existence, spending most of his time drifting through Portugal and Istanbul. He found new leverage in his association with Soledad Miranda, a stunning brunette (who appeared as Lucy in **COUNT DRACULA**) around whom he proceeded to build several films. After filming seven important Spanish/West German co-productions, Miranda (who used the pseudonym "Susann Korda" for the more explicit German versions of these films) died at age 27 in a tragic automobile accident.

A dazed Franco fulfilled his German contract with two uncharacteristically manic quickies – **Jungfrauen Report** ("Virgin Report") and **Robinson und Seine Wilden Sklavinnen** ("Robinson Crusoe and his Wild Slaves") – then relocated to Paris, where he renewed his association with Eurociné. His notorious workaholic tendencies now became even more pronounced. The French films – which include the fabulously bizarre **THE EROTIC RITES OF FRANKENSTEIN** [*Les Expériences Erotiques de Frankenstein*, 1972], **THE LOVES OF IRINA** [*La Comtesse aux Seins Nus*, 1973] and **DEMONIAC** [*Le Sadique de Notre Dame*, "The Sadist of Notre Dame," 1979] – constitute some of Franco's most unique and important work, a horrific and erotic iconoclast of creative energy that pushed the envelope of the forbidden in both extremist categories. In them, the spectre of Soledad Miranda was quickly recorporealized by the pseudonymous Lina Romy, an uninhibited Spanish teenager of vaguely similar appearance, who became the refocus of Franco's darkly lascivious obsessions, dominated his next fifteen years of work (over 100 films!), and eventually became his wife and film editor.

The Porno Holocaust Years (1976-81)

Franco followed this white-hot spell of incessant productivity with two years (1976-77) in Zurich, where he made sexploitation films (also his infamous **JACK THE RIPPER**, 1976) for Swiss producer Erwin C. Dietrich's Elite Film. This period is distinguished by its heavy concentration of women's prison pictures and other crepuscular forms of erotica. These formulaic movies were occasionally interrupted by ill-advised European co-production forays, best typified by the bland

cannibal *opera* **WHITE CANNIBAL QUEEN** [*Mondo Cannibale*, 1979] and **MAN HUNTER** [*Il Cacciatore di Uomini*, 1980]. Whereas the preceding period was effectively iconoclastic, the hard-edged realism and underlying bitterness of this period is literally holocaustic.

It was also during this period that Franco revived his Manacoa company (founded 1972). Perhaps not surprisingly, a close study of the Manacoa productions suggests that they were filmed simultaneously with the Elite productions, with the same locations and casts (always minus the conspicuous lead players). Draw your own conclusions...

The Homecoming Years (1981-Present)

After the death of Generalissimo Francisco Franco, his prodigal (and prodigious) namesake returned to a newly-liberated Madrid and embarked with renewed energy on his latest phase. Averaging eight films per year, Franco's second Spanish period began with an avalanche of satirically perverse sex films. Judging

from the few titles available from this period – where the emphasis remains on eroticism but assumes a cooler, even uneroticized stance where nudity becomes mere, even ludicrous nakedness (helped along by La Romaine's noticeable weight gain) – the preceding incendiary period may have been illustrative of Franco's own creative burn-out. The same cooling phenomenon is noticeable in Franco's increasingly crude directorial techniques.

Things began to change as European screens were overrun with American-made sequels, inspiring Franco to appropriate certain generic European characters like "O" and Emmanuelle into his twisted scenarios. After briefly reanimating the Edgar Wallace cycle (with *Sangre en mis Zapatos*, "Blood on my Shoes," 1983 and *Viaje a Bangkok, Ataud Incluido*, "Trip to Bangkok – Coffin Included," 1985), he revived Orloff, Al Pereira, Eugenie and the Amazons (from his **MA-CISTE** films) to take part in new fleshpot adventures of their own. Among the most peculiar mutations were two Kung Fu items, the first AIDS exploitation film (*SIDA, La Peste del Siglo XX*, "AIDS: The Plague of the 20th Century," 1986), and a series of nominally-related hardcore films including *El Ojete de Lulu* ("Lulu's Dark Circles") and *El Chupete de Lulu*

Estella Blain (1934-81), the first of Franco's tragic fetish actresses, in her greatest role: Miss Death in THE DIABOLICAL DR. Z (1966). Her life ended in suicide.



Special Agent Lucky (Ray Danton) wows 'em at Mardi Gras. For more details, read Volume XII of his *Memoirs*, or see *LUCKY THE INSCRUTABLE* (1967).



("Lulu's Lollipop," both 1985), allegedly directed by "Lulu Laverne"!

This is the most difficult of all Franco periods to evaluate, due as much to its meandering inconsistency as to the fact that not enough of it is available in this country to render an informed judgment. The output here is unquestionably more mechanical and workmanlike, with few gems to speak of (the outstanding exception being perhaps *Macumba Sexual*, 1981). The films are also riddled with more (and more confusing) pseudonyms than ever, indicating that Franco may have been more preoccupied during this industrious period with the art of the deal than with the art that followed.

It is still too early to tell whether Franco's recent films for French video entrepreneur René Chateau – which star the likes of Caroline Munro, Telly Savalas and Christopher Mitchum – will initiate a return to the big-name commercialism of his Harry Alan Towers years.



If I've learned anything from watching 90 Franco films, it is that these movies cannot be watched in the same way one might view any comparable English-language releases. With the films of Richard Donner or John Badham (to use as examples Franco's own favorite contemporary American filmmakers), if you've seen

one of their films, you've seen them all. With Franco's films, it's different: *You can't see one **until** you've seen them all.* A degree of immersion is essential.

After seeing so many of these things (and 90 works out to a pathetic 3/5 of his total output), I've discovered that, when I return as a more informed viewer to those movies which provided the first steps of my investigation, those I once found boring now yield valuable information I'd never have gleaned had I trusted to instinct and not bothered looking back. And a handful of titles I formerly considered unwatchable (**REVENGE IN THE HOUSE OF USHER** [*El Hundimiento de la Casa Usher*, 1983], for example) I can now recognize as accomplishments, admittedly modest but nonetheless genuine.

This backward illumination leads me to advise that Franco's films should not be casually dismissed, especially on the grounds of how "poorly" they might compare with other movies, particularly by those viewers without the necessary immersion to form a valid opinion. I'm afraid I was occasionally guilty of this charge myself in my FANGORIA articles, which I now see were written too early in my dawning appreciation of the films, when I still labored under a condescendingly deluded impression that Franco (on the basis of his flabbergasting cameo appearances) was somehow more cartoon character than artist. True, my articles were written with tremendous enthusiasm and affection, even giddiness but also, I understand, without the

Senorita Lorna Green (Janine Reynaud) exchanges sweet nothings with Admiral Karr (Howard Vernon) in SUCCUBUS (1967).



KARR
Francois Villon.

LORNA
Bitterness.

KARR
Johann Strauss.

LORNA
Bats.

KARR
Peter Weiss.

LORNA
Circle.

KARR
Kafka.

LORNA
"The Castle."

KARR
Heine.

LORNA
Domino.

KARR
Hitchcock.

LORNA
Eyes.

KARR
Caldwell.

LORNA
MURDER!!

respect that is Franco's due, first of all, as a man who has made some truly marvelous films and, at the very least, as a survivor in a most impossible business.

It saddened me to hear (from Donald Farmer, who met the man himself in Paris last summer) that my articles prompted Franco to complain, "I don't mind being called a bad filmmaker, but I am not silly – and I don't make silly films." His words had a sobering effect on my perspective and, simple as his statement was, it carried a note of wounded pride that has informed the way I've since begun to reason with, or "read" his movies.

I've been trying to assimilate a new "mind-set" in terms of how I approach and critique Franco's work and believe that, even in its primitive stage of development, my insights may be useful to other people approaching these films from a similarly disorientated perspective.

Marginality

Franco considers himself a "marginal" director and, I must admit, a great deal of his cumulative allure comes from my own realization that I am a "marginal" filmmaker. The most obvious and effective shoehorn to ease anyone into Franco's demented universe is therefore a dissatisfaction with mainstream cinema (which is why Franco's own recent gropings toward a more commercial action cinema are so disheartening). Speaking for myself, I haven't in the last several years had many happy experiences with American movies – I hate all the major releases from **TERMS OF ENDEARMENT** to **RAIN MAN**, which so often are recklessly rewritten by preview audience cards, their continuity left looking as moth-eaten as some power luncheon's nasal septum – and the chances of things getting better run about even with **HEATHERS'** chances for a Best Screenplay nomination. To dislike the present standards of commercial American filmmaking, however, is not to say that one's personal standards aren't affected by them; after all, you can hate the man in the White House and still feel that America is the best place in the world to live.

Destylization

It doesn't stand to reason that a filmmaker – particularly one as well-educated and cosmopolitan as Franco's interviews reveal him to be – can make 150 movies and not learn how to make them "better." The First Period alone shows that Franco is perfectly capable of making films of classical proportion. Once this truth becomes apparent, the first

clarification one must attend to is one's definition of "better."

In my case, I eventually realized that I wasn't taking the films as seriously as they deserved because of their tendency to provoke disbelief in me; that, to win my respect, I expected Franco to conform to a more polished standard, in which his films repeatedly told my unseeing eyes he had no interest in achieving. His interviews (now that I've read them) are perfectly explicit about his intentions: he makes films because he loves making films, and his films are marginal in the way his own interests are marginal to the mainstream of experience, as well as to that of cinema.

I am certain we've all had the experience of reviewing a film we hate in a situation outside our norm, the shape of which dictates and more specifically cramps our tastes – in another town perhaps, in buoyant company, or perhaps under the influence of the same stimulant the director was using – and suddenly *seeing* it, getting it, loving it. Don't we all make the mistake of bringing *ourselves* to the movies? As an American, I can attest to the fact that American audiences (and this may be subtly connected to our political condescension toward fellow nations) seldom stop to consider the European point of view; not the British perspective, much less the exotic subtexts peculiar to Spanish, Italian or Russian cinema. In America, we'd rather hire a hack at Touchstone to remake the most popular foreign films in our own swaggering, god-fearing image than confront the originals on their own, individual terms. We'll spend millions to save thousands the public embarrassment of kneeling before a looming subtitle from **La Cage aux Folles**... er, **BIRDS OF A FEATHER**, so it only follows that the films of Jess Franco (who's not above shooting two or more films back-to-back, to make the most of a \$200,000 budget) are ignoble at worst, or cultish at best. Neither tag comes to terms with the films themselves.

Our own thoughtless cinematic tendencies compel us to take films preoccupied with sex and violence on a superficial basis; we expect no more or less from exploitation films than instant, sensual gratification. Why else would stylization have become so important once gore began to lose its atavistic charge? It's the Next Step in the titillation of the eye. Having lost touch with our literary traditions, we sometimes fail to admit that movies at their best are a more *present* form of literature, and that sex and murder are the more *present* forms of those great literary themes, Love and Death – subjects ennobling in the Third Person, empathic in the Second, deeply disconcerting in the First.

Franco's jaded insistence toward destylization, the roughing-away of all gloss, adjusts the confrontational aspects of the horror cinema back to First Person. The discomfort we derive from his blunt techniques – his

Soledad Miranda (1943-71), the second and most compelling of Franco's tragic starlets, does it with mirrors in VAMPYROS LESBOS (1970).



crude zooms, the well-trodden locations, the stock players overused to the point where they can portray only themselves – this collective discomfort is reflective of our uneasiness as we see the extremities of experience laid bare, shaped into obsessions tangible enough to unseat our own; dark fascinations which become more present than feels safe when photographic clumsiness dismantles the protective silver barrier of the screen. Just as the reality of an erotic scene in a sex film is heightened as the cinematographer trips over a power cable, the failure to capture the composition of a violent or shocking moment in a horror film is to suggest that the moment has (if only briefly) ruptured the pretense of being part of a horror film. Naturally, there is no room for such destylization in a classical piece: witness the failure of a Franco film like **COUNT DRACULA**, in which images from a pre-electric era are so hotly collected that Manuel Merino's handheld camera awkwardly notes its own shadow on the padded wall of Renfield's cell. Yet, in instances where the image is so shocking that the camera's incalculations mimics the viewer's own emotional stagger – as in certain scenes of **THE LOVES OF IRINA** – Franco's most obvious shortcoming becomes one of his most transcendent devices.

Ennui

One of the recurring accusations directed at Franco's work is that it's too often listless or boring. I've come to recognize this complaint as a convenient form of audi-

ent surrender, because the attitude in these films most easily confused with boredom is more precisely *ennui*, the state of mind wherein (it could be argued) all aberrant behavior begins. Houses, architecture and landscape are important to Franco's films – several of his Spanish productions from the early 1980's were filmed at his own townhouse in Madrid, where their bizarre scripts were written – and all of his favorite, recurring locations seem to inspire similar notes of oneiric detachment. Unlike the baroque trappings of the Italian horror film, which suggest a projection of their characters' interior complications while seeing through to a past pregnant with other private hells, it is necessary for us to patiently explore the barren desolation of Castle Usher, even to become irritated by the absurd, Kafkaesque travail of getting *inside* it, before we can appreciate the spiritual condemnation of its inhabitant (Howard Vernon).

EROTIKILL – the purely horrific edition of a film which also exists in two additional versions (sex-horror: **La Comtesse aux Seins Nus**, "The Bare-Breasted Countess", and hardcore sex: **Les Avaleuses**, "The Swallowers") – was reportedly inspired by Franco's visit to Madeira in the Portuguese islands (the birthplace of Soledad Miranda). The film is a perfect example not only of a production dominated by ambience, but particularly of its transcendental uses of destylization and ennui. An unschooled eye may find much amusement in the apparent minimalism of this erotic vampire film, tense with listlessness from its first languid frames. The ennui here (enhanced by an obsessively recurring Daniel White composition perversely reminiscent of

"I'm Forever Blowing Bubbles") is a projection of the existential boredom afflicting the film's male lead (Jack Taylor), a metaphysical poet who arranges a tryst with the undead Countess Irina Karlstein (Lina Romy) knowing it will mean his death ("Would you take me with you, behind the mist?" he pleads).

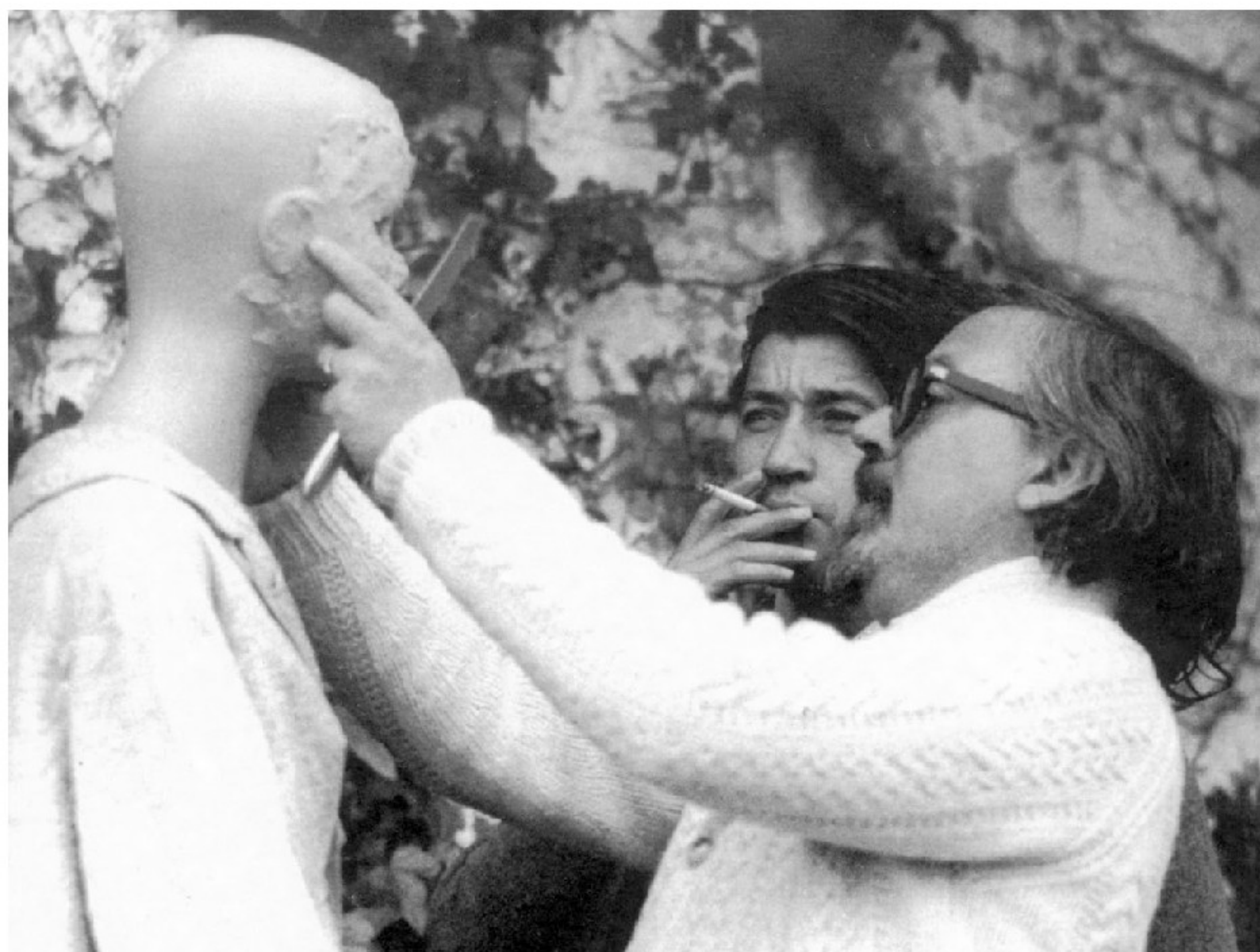
Director Frank Henenlotter – who admires the film – remarked in *FANGORIA* #72 that the Countess flaps her cape and "turns into a seagull instead of a bat, simply because a seagull flew overhead," but this economic explanation is only half an answer, which doesn't address other similar devices used in the film, such as the winged hood ornament that flaps as the Countess' limousine cruises the circulatory hillside roads of Madeira. I would suggest the film is less concerned with snapping up cheap imagery than with arriving independently and consciously at its own complementary, or rhyming, images. Gulls, not bats, haunt the Madeira of Franco's memories and Irina, whom he remembers and symbolically associates with the romantic melancholy he found there, *would* become a gull; the chord this strikes is soulful, certainly a preferable, more organic alternative to the use of laughable, mechanical bats. It is also useful to know that **EROTIKILL** is expounding, with these shots, on a technique initiated in the similar *Vampyros Lesbos* – a film lamentably unavailable in the US – which complements its Turkish locations with kites suggestive of bats, precedes its oral "penetration" scenes with shots of scorpions skittering with stingers poised, and dresses Soledad Miranda's open-air villa in fishing nets amus-

ingly evocative of the spider webs that ran riot over the broken battlements of Tod Browning's *Castle Dracula*.

Time and Continuity

In Franco's locations, vague as dream states, time itself tends to not exist. **THE SCREAMING DEAD** [*Dracula contra Frankenstein*, 1972] is virtually a silent film – supposedly made in homage to James Whale, but far more evocative of what Murnau might've done with Universal's **HOUSE OF FRANKENSTEIN** (1944) and color stock – which evolves a meticulous period atmosphere, only to shatter its remote haze of coaches and taverns when Dr. Frankenstein (Dennis Price) pulls into town in a chillingly *present* black limousine. *Maciste contra la Reine des Amazones* ("Maciste vs. the Amazon Queen," 1973) begins, judging from the wardrobe, in 16th Century Spain although one of the acting leads (Robert Woods) later removes his shirt to reveal a large tattoo on his right bicep! As previously noted in regard to Franco's occasional technical lapses, these easily avoidable lapses in continuity are too aggressively *present* to have gone unnoticed; they instead come across as permissible exaggerations, stark incongruities which suggest that we are not watching serious retreads of cinematic myths like Frankenstein or Maciste or Doctor Mabuse, but rather a madman's demented variations on a theme.

In a similar vein, Bram Stoker's character of Dr. Seward, first introduced into Franco's *oeuvre* in



Franco decorates an inhabitant of Alice Arno's human waxworks for PLAISIR A TROIS (1973). The still photographer was Mario Lippert – the real name of... Howard Vernon!

COUNT DRACULA, went on to become one of the director's many obsessively recurring fixtures, revived at first as a similar asylum-keeper in direct spin-offs like **Vampyros Lesbos** (1970) and **La Fille de Dracula** ("Daughter of Dracula," 1972), and finally evolving into a wheelchair-bound psychologist (played by Franco himself) who develops a psychic link with Lina Romay's clitoris in **SHINING SEX** (1975)!⁴

Music

A musician in his own right, Franco has managed some particularly impressive achievements in his evocative uses of music, Daniel White's ennui-inducing score to **EROTIKILL** being among the most blatant examples. The composer (or associate composer) of several of his films' scores, Franco made his earliest screen cameos playing musicians, and he can be glimpsed as a pianist in the smoky periphery of nightclub scenes in **DR. ORLOFF'S MONSTER** and **Residencia para Espias**; he also appears as the trombonist in James Darren's combo in **VENUS IN FURS**.

VENUS IN FURS is a particularly important film in this context, because the music – composed by Manfred Mann and Mike Hugg – almost never stops, and the accumulation of its alternately feverish and coolly iridescent tonalities becomes truly hypnotic. The emotions aroused by the music, in fact, go a long way towards supplanting the linear qualities lacking from its sensually shapeless, dreamlike structure.

There is at least one known instance of Franco recycling a melody from earlier in his career to make an implicit thematic statement. A haunting melody used in **Exorcismes et messes noires** (1974, and in its hardcore variant, **Sexorcismes**)⁵ may seem disturbingly familiar to viewers acquainted with Franco's film **HAND OF A DEAD MAN** [**Le Sadique Baron von Klaus**, 1963]. In that film's opening moments, a bar-room chanteuse sings, to the piano accompaniment of the same melody, "*C'est l'histoire d'un homme qui souffre...*" ("This is the story of a man who suffers.") Knowledge of this lyric sheds an entirely new, sympathetic light on Vogel (Franco), the film's disturbed lead character, again – as with **VENUS IN FURS** – lending insights not especially well-articulated within the film's linear narrative.

As Franco revealed in an interview with **SEXSTARS SYSTEM** in 1973, one of his greatest pleasures is to "wink at my friends in my films"; in other words, to incorporate private jokes which are, in many cases, musical. In the sex satire **LADY PORNO** [**Porno Dama**, a 1982 revised edition of **MIDNIGHT PARTY**, 1975], "Charlie Christian" (Alain Petit) plays a Communist rock star who sings these hilarious, existential lyrics

ad infinitum against a 4/4 beat: "*Merde, merde, merde/La vie est une merde!*"⁶ According to his friend Lucas Balbo, Petit was asked by Franco to record *two* versions of the song – hard rock and slow blues – but only the first was used in the film. Apparently without Petit's knowledge, his slow blues version was later recycled for use near the beginning of **Las Orgias inconfessables de Emmanuelle** ("The Blasphemous Orgies of Emmanuelle," a 1982 film difficult to see in Petit's native France)! The "Life is Shit" saga continues in the women's prison film **Un Secondina in un carcere femminile** ("Wardenship at a Women's Prison" aka **Visa pour mourir**, "Passport for Death," 1977), where a freshly showered prisoner can be heard singing the song as she towels off!

Anarchy and Identity

These outrageous "winks" bring us to one of the most important aspects of Franco's work (particularly his freer, disillusioned, post-1970 films), namely his use of understated humor. While the tone of this article is serious because it intends to be taken seriously and affect change, Franco's films are themselves humorous in ways which don't always survive translation or dubbing. As a director of vampire movies without bats, *pepla* without muscles, sound-era films without dialogue, Franco is a *bona-fide* celluloid anarchist, as also indicated by some of his infamous cameo appearances. As early as the hardcore **Sexorcismes**, actor "Jess Frank" can be seen performing cunnilingus on an abducted victim.⁷ In **HELLHOLE WOMEN** [**Sadomania**, 1980], an uncredited Franco appears as a gay white slave trader, first glimpsed while being ecstatically sodomized by a native boy. In **PICK UP GIRLS** [**Las Chicas de las Bragas Transparentes**, 1981], Franco pops up in a frontally nude cameo as the paunchy corpse of a man murdered during coitus! Hilarious and outrageous as these appearances may be, it's a laudably heroic gesture that Franco continues to cast himself in roles no other actor would touch – and Franco is indeed an actor, once prize-nominated for his performance in Fernando Fernan Gomez' **El Extrano Viaje** ("The Strange Voyage," 1965) – indisputable proof that the man loves his work more than his own self-image.

Pseudonyms are often used to shield one's identity

*Lina Romay as
Countess Irina Karlstein,
draining Jack Taylor in the disturbing
EROTIKILL/THE LOVES OF IRINA (1973).*



LA VOCE DI BILL SUONA RIDICOLMENTE FALSA IMBARAZZATA. LORNA LO FISSA A LUNGO NEGLI OCCHI MA NON HA BISOGNO DI MOLTO PER CAPIRE.



Certo! Non mi aspettavo un'altra risposta da te! Ora baciami, te ne prego!

S...si...!



E BILL AVVICINA LA SUA BOCCA A QUELLA DI LORNA. LORNA CHE, CONTEMPORANEAMENTE, FA SGUSCIARE DA SOTTO IL FIANCO DOVE LO TENEVA NASCOSTO IL SUO PUGNALE...



...E GLIELO PUNTA ALLA NUCA! TROPPO TARDI BILL SI ACCORGE DELLO ERRORE COMMESSO...



TROPPO TARDI BILL COMPRENDE CHE NON PUO' MUOVERSI, CHE IL MINIMO GESTO, LA MINIMA REAZIONE POTREBBERO ESSERGLI FATALI...RESTA IMMOBILE CON LE LABBRA INCOLLATE SU QUELLE DI LORNA ED IL CUORE IN TUMULTO...



MA LORNA NON HA ESITAZIONI E MALGRADO CIO' AFFONDA CRUDELMENTE LA LAMA ALLA BASE DEL SUO COLLO....

SUCCUBUS (1967) had quite a different denouement in its original European



BILL SENTE LA MORTE ARRIVARE, I SUOI OCCHI FISSANO PER UN ATTIMO VERSO IL CIELO, MA SOLTANTO PER UN ATTIMO. GIÀ UNA NUVOLA NERA SCENDE SU DI ESSI PER SEMPRE....



POCO DOPO UN'AUTO CORRE VERSO UN LUOGO SELVAGGIO, SULL'AUTO LORNA SCARMIGLIATA MORMORA PAROLE SCONNESSE....



POI ELLA SCENDE CORRENDO PER LASCIARSI CADERE IN UN DIRUPO ORRIDO CHE SEMBRA NON DOVER AVERE MAI FINE....

Aaahhh!!



DOV'E' LORNA LA TUA BELLEZZA? QUELLA BELLEZZA CHE HAI AMATO AL PUNTO DA SNATURARE TE STESSA, DA RIFIUTARTI DI DARE ALLA NATURA CIO' CHE LA NATURA AVEVA DATO A TE? ORA HAI L'ORRIDO VOLTO DELLA MORTE, LORNA!



E FORSE, DAL MONDO DEI MORTI ORA COMPRENDI CHE NON SI PUO' VIVERE PER AMARE SOLO SE STESSI. NON SI PUO' FARE DEL PROPRIO CORPO E DEL PROPRIO ESSERE IL PROPRIO DIO, PERCHE' NOI SIAMO STATI CREATI A SUA IMMAGINE E SOMIGLIANZA. E' VERO. MA NON SIAMO LUI.....



MA ORA, SE LO COMPRENDI, IN TE C'E' POSTO SOLO PER IL RIMORSO, LORNA! ...

FINE.

version, as confirmed by the last pages of its cineromanzi adaptation, *DELIRIUM*.

Franco himself stars as the deranged Vogel in the shockingly exhibitionistic DEMONIAK (1979).



from guilt-by-association with a bad picture, but Franco is equally likely to use a false name on his best work. The pseudonyms so frequently used by Franco (Clifford Brown, James P. Johnson, Dave Tough, etc.) are in fact largely tributary, derived from his passion for these real historical figures from the world of jazz. The aforementioned Alain Petit appears in a few Franco films under the pseudonym “Charlie Christian”, named for the electric guitar pioneer of the Tommy Dorsey orchestra, posthumously inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame in 1989. Even the name “Lina Romay” is a wily pseudonym for actress Rosa Maria Almirall, brazenly appropriated from a renowned South American actress/singer, formerly with Xavier Cugat’s Orchestra! (The “real” Lina Romay is featured as the live-action love interest in Tex Avery’s MGM cartoon **SEÑOR DROOPY**, 1949!) The only way for us to identify with the absolute anarchy of such procedures is to conceive of an American director adopting the pseudonym of Billy Holliday, to make a movie about a spy named Barbara Bush (who uses a license to strip as a cover for her license to kill), starring a hardcore actress who goes by the name Doris Day!⁸

Nationality

Obviously, this sort of fun would never be permitted in such a litigious country as ours, which brings us to the specifically national character of the Franco films. One of Franco’s recurring themes – particularly in his women’s prison films, like **99 WOMEN** (1968),

BARBED WIRE DOLLS [*Frauengefangnis*, 1976] and **ILSA THE WICKED WARDEN** [*Greta, Haus ohne Manner*, 1977] – is that national character fluctuates far more frequently and dangerously than individual character, which corrupts and weakens the governments established to overrule a private sector stressed and strengthened (but sometimes crushed) by the same process. Franco may insist that he doesn’t care for political films but, given his broad cosmopolitan base, certain political truths cannot help but surface even in his crassest exploitation fare – **THE WOMEN OF CELLBLOCK NINE** [*Frauen fur Zellenblock 9*, 1977], for instance, which presents an unnamed Third World country ruled by seedy sadists, former outcasts of its own society.

Unless we understand that Franco’s films are Spanish – the work of a Spaniard whether they were shot in Spain, France, Switzerland or West Germany – there is a great deal to be overlooked in the subtexts of his work and, even at this stage, I must admit I’m only beginning to scratch the surface of such an understanding. There are certain aspects of these films which I realize, as an American, I can never know.

Nothing in the history of English-American cinema, for example, will be of the slightest use to anyone trying to get a grip on Franco’s playfully elusive **SUCCUBUS**.⁹ The movie explicitly outlines its own universe of referents (Lang, Bunuel, Godard and the equally obvious if unmentioned Alain Robbe-Grillet), none of them Spanish but, in it, Franco – who at the time was unable to make the films he wanted in his own censorious country – continually looks back with expatriate pain at

his national origins, using Spanish imagery to illustrate how his work belongs to a recognized tradition. It took Pedro Almodovar's **MATADOR** (1986, which includes scenes from **BLOODY MOON**, 1980) to point out to me that Janine Reynaud's method for knifing her male victims was derived from the classical pose reserved by matadors for their bulls.

By the same token, my initial impression of the cellblock sex scenes in **ISLAND WOMEN** [*Gefangenefrauen*, 1980] – as women prisoners are subjected to intercourse by their guards to the tune of tauromachic fanfares – was one of amusement and mild distaste. I'm sure that Franco would not begrudge his audience of taking pleasure from the scene, but it's unfair and patronizing to simply laugh at the music, assuming its mistakenness, without considering why such a track was deliberately chosen. The perhaps less apparent point of these scenes is that the guards, in forcing themselves on their smiling prisoners, are lord-ing their power over them to the ends of its own loss: they spend in these beds more than they buy. The bullfight music, which embodies a laughably obvious *macho* component, also embraces a mutual demonstration of prowess which shall end in the defeat of one, imbuing the scene with arcane shadings of mortal preparedness, a fact hardly deemphasized by the film's use of an abandoned bullring for Tago Mago Prison.

Voice

Despite their implicitly national vocabulary, Franco's films are at the same time nation-less. During the reign of his namesake's regime, his most daring work could be seen in Spain only in censored form. Because of their international bases as European co-productions, these films are almost always shot MOS (without sound) and dubbed into French, Spanish, German, Portuguese and English; they invariably fare worst in English. The English dubbing of **REVENGE IN THE HOUSE OF USHER**, **EROTIKILL**, and **A VIRGIN AMONG THE LIVING DEAD** [*Une Vierge chez les*

morts-vivants, 1971] ranks with the worst I've seen, due not particularly to how poorly the translated sentences fit the actors' lip movements, but for their heavy use of ineptly matched, unprofessional-sounding voices. Hard to believe, yet it is just possible that the dubbing of these films was supervised by Franco himself, as Howard Vernon himself dubbed his own Usher performance. It's unfortunate that the inadequacies of their dubbing makes these films unwatchable by the standards of most English-speaking film enthusiasts, because their foreign editions – which, in these three cases, are also more complete in terms of explicitly chilling content – have a much more sophisticated feel that, one suspects, is closer to the truth of them.



Europe is as ancient as history, and the world turns east to west, so it's not to be unexpected that Jess Franco's films are somewhat ahead of their time. And it's hardly surprising that he has so often been condemned without first being understood because, as philosophers say, the road to Hell is paved with good intentions. The video business has grown into a commercial dynamo in recent years, and companies no longer need to loot European vaults for acquisitions – it's cheaper for them to produce their own direct-to-video features and the results, to most people's tastes, are "better." Consequently, domestic releases of Franco's films have been painfully rare in recent years. However, as more of them become available on imported, foreign-language or bootleg cassettes, where an artist's work still counts for something, the password required to fully step inside his peculiar realm will become more pronounced, adding new shadings of information and readability to those works we've already seen and collected. And someday, perhaps, some of us will be lucky enough to add the final jigsaw piece to a puzzle composed of more than 150, which when fully assembled, will in all likelihood describe the revelation of nothing more than the *true* shape of the first piece of the puzzle, and the obsolescence of all you've just read.

NOTES:

1. B&W prints of **ATTACK OF THE ROBOTS** were released directly to the small screen in the United States by American International Television. Color prints have never surfaced domestically, or on European video. In addition to deleting a striptease by Sophie Hardy, the B&W prints render meaningless a plot device which has the robots change color when deactivated.
2. "Entretien avec Michel Lemoine," *VAMPIRELLA* #9.
3. **KISS ME MONSTER** was released by the now-defunct Value Home Video in 1980, but is no longer available. The print used was moderately scratchy at the point of reel changes and retained the film's original 1:85 framing. In a charming gesture of

showmanship, Value shrink-wrapped each cassette with a bloodshot rubber eyeball affixed to the cellophane.

4. Among Franco's other recurring, era-straddling characters, who pop up in film after film, wearing different faces and leading different lives, are Orloff, Morpho, Lorna, Al Pereira, Linda, Ahmet, Inspector Tanner, Vogel and, of course, "the Countess." If there are any connections to be drawn by connecting these scattered dots, the divination of those constellations must be left for the moment to other hands.
5. Much of this film's footage was later used to create a revised edition, **DEMONIAC** (aka **THE SADIST OF NOTRE DAME**, 1979). The music and dubbing in this version are different.
6. Readers may be interested to learn that the Watchdog knows of three different versions of this film – **Sylvia la Baiseuse** ("Sylvia the Fucking Girl," French), **LADY PORNO** (Spanish), and **La Coccolona** (Italian) – and each is edited in an entirely different way, with Petit's song appearing respectively at the beginning, middle and near the end!
7. It is worth noting here that Caroline Riviere, who appears in the film as a nightclub dancer whom Franco strips and sexually torments near the film's

climax, is actually the *daughter* of Franco's second wife and former script-girl, Nicole Guettard! Riviere has also appeared in her father-in-law's films under the *nom de l'écran* "Caroline Rock."

8. Even those pseudonyms derived by Franco from cinematic sources are unusually arcane. The names of certain characters recurring throughout his filmography – like Dr. Orloff, secret agent Al Pereira, or the succubic Lorna Green – are culled respectively from Bela Lugosi's character in **THE DARK EYES OF LONDON** (1940); Hollywood art director Hal Pereira; and Lorna Gray, who played "Vultura," the *femme fatale* of William Whitney's serial **THE PERILS OF NYOKA** (1942) – a character which also inspired Melissa the Bird Woman, seen in **THE EROTIC RITES OF FRANKENSTEIN**. In several of Franco's Swiss and German co-productions, German actress Liliane Sollberger appears under the name Ava (or "Eva") Garden, Franco's tribute to Ava Gardner, the star of Nicholas Ray's **55 DAYS AT PEKING** (1963), on which he worked as a second-unit director.
9. The American release version of **SUCCUBUS** was extensively re-edited by Terry Alexander, at a loss of 8m – without Franco's consent or approval. See center spread for the original European ending of the film, as published in the Italian *cineromanzi* magazine, CINESEX.



WE NOTICED A PECULIAR continuity error in one of the best episodes of the usually flawless OUTER LIMITS series. In "**The Man Who Was Never Born**" (MGM/UA), actor John Considine plays Bertram Cabot, whose future son will isolate the microbe that will ultimately mutate and destroy civilization. After his initial scene with Martin Landau on the rooming house porch, Considine appears in his second scene – in the woods with Shirley Knight – sporting the dark tailored stubble of a mustache! The growth disappears in his subsequent scenes.

Incidentally, actress Maxine Stuart – who plays Mrs. McCluskey, the landlady in the episode – is the actress who played the bandaged heroine of TWILIGHT ZONE's classic "**Eye of the Beholder**" episode. Ms. Stuart's exquisite, agonizing pantomime was capped, of course, by the scene in which her bandages are unravelled to reveal... actress Donna Douglas.

Jess Franco

Selective Videography

EDITOR'S NOTE:

This list is not meant to be definitive; only those Franco films mentioned in the preceding article are listed. All tapes listed below are in the NTSC format except British cassettes, which are in PAL. All European running times reflect NTSC conversion. Thanks to Mark Ashworth of EYEBALL for the UK videography notes, and to Craig Ledbetter and Michael Secula for additional listings.

Mondo Video (154 Big Spring Circle, Cookeville, TN 38501) is a mail order service specializing in NTSC transfers of foreign video product. Viva Video, Caliente Video, and Video Mago are Spanish-language labels manufactured for the ethnic market in the US by, respectively, Unicorn and Million Dollar Video. Most of these titles are obtainable via Video Mania (Suite 129, 2520 N. Lincoln Avenue, Chicago, IL 60614).

ATTACK OF THE ROBOTS*

(Video Images, \$29.95 and Sinister Cinema, \$19.95) – Though filmed in color, this film has been released in America only in B&W. These video copies, likewise.

AVALEUSES, LES

- France: (BGV)
- Germany: **Entfesselte begierde** ("Unbridled Desires," Video Toppic) – It should be noted for completists that this hardcore version is not the definitive version of the film one might expect. Both foreign versions of the video are letterboxed, but the sex inserts consist of only three extended fellatious interludes – two male, one female – which (judging from Lina Romay's shorter, curly hairstyle) look to have been filmed later than the rest of the picture. The male organ footage is used in Ms. Romay's sessions with both Jack

Taylor and Ramon Ardid, while the lesbian footage is also recycled, used in her sessions with Monica Swinn and Gilda Arancio. The film stops abruptly with the blood-bathing sequence. Its running time is 96m.

AWFUL DR. ORLOFF, THE

(Video Mania, \$27.00, announced)

- France: **L'Horrible Docteur Orlof** (GCR Video) – The French version of this film contains two brief scenes of above-the-waist female nudity never before seen in America.

BARBED WIRE DOLLS

(IVC, OP)

- UK: **CAGED WOMEN** (Video Instant Picture Co.)

BLOODY MOON

(TransWorld, \$56.95)

- Canada: (Same title, \$29.00) – Available from Video Mania.
- Italy: **Profondo Tenebrae** ("Deep Darkness") – This version has surfaced in Italian-American video stores.
- UK: (Interlight Video) – This was released in two versions: one uncut, the other a British X Certificate print (equivalent to US "R" rating).

CASTLE OF FU MANCHU, THE

(Electric, \$49.95)

COCCOLONA, LA

- Canada: (Master Video Productions, \$N/A – Italian)

COUNT DRACULA*

(Republic, \$14.95)

- Canada: **Il Conte Dracula** (label unknown, \$N/A – Italian) – This version runs 83m, improving this lethargic film's pace considerably, and contains a different opening credits montage than the US edition (approx. 90m).
- Japan: (Hyperdelic, 3600 yen) – This version reportedly runs 97m – about 8m longer than the US version – which might indicate it's the most complete of any edition yet issued on video.

* Shortened for national theatrical release

** Censored video version

OP Out-of-print

N/A Information not available

DEADLY SANCTUARY*

(Monterey, \$79.95)

- UK: **JUSTINE** (Video Unlimited/Cyclo Video Range)

DEMONIAC*

(Wizard, OP)

- France: **Le Sadique de Notre Dame** (Ciné 7 Video)
- Holland: (Eagle 6 Video) English with Dutch subtitles.

DIABOLICAL DR. Z, THE

(Sinister Cinema, \$19.95)

DR. ORLOFF'S MONSTER

(Sinister Cinema, \$19.95)

- France: **Les Maitresses du Docteur Jekyll** (BGV)

EROTIC RITES OF FRANKENSTEIN, THE

(Mondo Video, \$19.95)

- UK: (Go Video)
- France: **Le Malediction de Frankenstein** (Video Box)

EROTIKILL

(Lightning/Wizard, OP)

EXORCISMES ET MESSES NOIRES

- France: **Sexorcisme** (Ciné 7 Video) – This is actually the hardcore version of **Exorcismes et messes noires**, which deletes approximately 20m of footage involving two supporting characters in favor of a nearly equal amount of explicit erotica. It is substantially different from **Demoniac**. Onscreen title: **Exorcisme**.

FILLE DE DRACULA, LA

(Mondo Video, \$19.95 – French)

GEMIDOS DE PLACER

(Viva, \$29.95 – Spanish) – Video Mania offers this same tape under bogus title **PLEASURE OF DEATH** (a mistranslation).

HELLHOLE WOMEN**

(Degregory, price varies) – Imported version of CIC cassette.

- Canada: (CIC, \$9.95) – An abortion; 69m!
- Germany: **Sadomania** (Video Toppic) – This version is more complete than the Canadian Print, but still not intact. 84m.
- Japan: **Sadomania** (Hyperdelic, 3,600 yen) – The real thing, albeit with digitized nudity. 89m.

ILSA THE WICKED WARDEN*

(American, \$59.95; Image laserdisc, \$39.95)

- Japan: **GRETA THE MAD BUTCHER** (Hyperdelic, 3600 yen) – This version is reportedly letterboxed, electronically digitized to obscure pubic shots, and runs 99m.

ISLAND WOMEN

(Private Screenings, \$39.95)

- Germany: **Gefangenefrauen** (Videophon) – This version is also available from Mondo Video (\$19.95); it contains an additional 8m of footage including a new pre-credits sequence.

JACK THE RIPPER*

(Vestron, OP)

- France: **Jack l'Eventreur** (VIP)
- Germany: (Video Toppic)

A ridiculous shot that epitomizes Franco's Eighties output, from BLOODY MOON (1980).



JUNGFRAUEN REPORT

- Germany: (Video Toppic)

KISS ME MONSTER

(Value, OP; Mondo Video, \$19.95)

LADY PORNO

(See *Porno Dama*)

LOVES OF IRINA, THE

(Private Screenings, \$39.95)

MACISTE CONTRA LA REINE DES AMAZONES

(as *Yuka*: Mondo Video, \$19.95 – French)

- France: *Les Amazones de la luxure* (Video Box)
- French Canada: *Yuka* (MPM Productions) – This 73m tape lists an erroneous running time of 100m and contains Dutch subtitles.

MACUMBA SEXUAL

(Caliente Video, \$N/A – Spanish)

MANDINGO MANHUNTER

(Wizard, OP)

MAN HUNTER

(TransWorld, \$56.95)

- UK: **THE DEVIL HUNTER** (Cinéhollywood) – Banned in the Video Nasties debacle.

MIDNIGHT PARTY

(Private Screenings, \$39.95) – Although this tape bears the credits and synopsis of Franco's *La Partouze de Minuit*, it is in fact a mispackaged release of a Max Pécas film entitled **LEWDNESS**.

99 WOMEN*

(Republic, \$39.95)

ORGIAS INCONFESSABLES DE EMMANUELLE, LAS

(Caliente Video, \$N/A – Spanish)

PICK UP GIRLS

- UK: (Atlas Video/The Erotic Collection)
- Japan: (Toshiba) – While the title on the box of this film is **PICK UP GIRLS**, the title on the print itself is *Las Chicas de las Bragas Transparentes*. Despite the Spanish title, the film is dubbed in English with Japanese subtitles. As in all sexually explicit Japanese releases, all genitalia and coupling is electronically digitized to obscure the image.

PLEASURE OF DEATH

(See *Gemidos de Placer*)

PORNO DAMA

(Viva/Unicorn, \$49.95 – Spanish); see also

Coccolona, La

- France: *Sylvia la baiseuse* (label unknown)

REVENGE IN THE HOUSE OF USHER**

(Wizard, OP)

ROBINSON UND SEINE WILDEN SKLAVINNEN

- Germany: (Video Toppic)

SADIQUE BARON VON KLAUS, LE

- France: (Ciné 7 Video)

SADISTEROTICA

- Spain: *La Caso de los dos bellezas* (Video España)

SANGRE EN MIS ZAPATOS

(Video Mago, \$N/A – Spanish)

SCREAMING DEAD, THE**

(Wizard, OP) – English-speaking countries have access to several different versions of this film. In America, a subtly-altered version entitled *Dracula contra Frankenstein* has been televised by the satellite service, Galavision. In the UK, the BBC has shown a version under the title **DRACULA, PRISONER OF FRANKENSTEIN**. A complete, letterboxed print is rumored to be available on laserdisc in Japan, but this has yet to surface – if indeed it does exist.

SECONDINA IN UN CARCERE FEMMINILE, UN

(Mondo Video, \$19.95 – Italian) – This film should not be confused with **JAILHOUSE WARDRESS** (see “Venezuelan Video Safari – Miami Style!”), although the titles translate identically.

- France: *Visa pour mourir* (label unknown) – There are several minor differences between this version of the film and the Italian copy available domestically. The French copy contains additional, amusing footage involving the masked criminals, and a slightly different Daniel White score.
- UK: **WOMEN BEHIND BARS** (Go Video) – Direction of the British version is credited to Rick Deconnink (aka “Bigottini”).



There are no happy endings in Franco's films, not even WHITE CANNIBAL QUEEN (1979).

SEXORCISMES

(Mondo Video, \$19.95 – French); see *Exorcismes et messes noires*.

SHINING SEX

(Mondo Video, \$19.95)

- France: (BGV)

SUCCUBUS*

(Mondo Video, \$19.95)

- Germany: *Necronomicon* (Video Toppic) – Longer than the re-edited US version by 8m.

VAMPYROS LESBOS

(Mondo Video, \$19.95 – German)

- Germany: *Vampyros Lesbos Die Erbin des Dracula* (Video Toppic), 84m
- Spain: *Las Vampiras* (VDI) – As with all films dating from the early '70s, this Spanish version was censored, its nude scenes sometimes replaced by "covered" takes, but more often deleted altogether. This version runs approximately 72m.

VENUS IN FURS

(Republic, \$39.95)

VIRGIN AMONG THE LIVING DEAD, A**

(Wizard, OP)

- France: *Une Vierge chez les morts-vivants* (BGV, SHV & CIA, Mondo Video, \$19.95)
- Germany: *Eine Jungfrau bei den lebenden Toten* (Video Toppic)
- Italy: *Una Vergine fra i Morti Viventi* (label unknown)
- UK: (Careyvision/Horror Theatre Range & Iver Film Services) – Only the German and Italian versions of this film are uncut. The Iver tape, which has also surfaced in America in a bootleg edition sporting a British "X" certificate, is identical to the aborted version on Wizard.

WHITE CANNIBAL QUEEN

(Video City, \$59.95)

- France: *Mondo Cannibal* (Action Video)
- Italy: *La Dea Cannibale* (label unknown) – This version is available through Mondo Video (\$19.95). It contains a small amount of alternate footage, including a different opening credit sequence.
- UK: *THE CANNIBALS* (European Video Co./Cinéhollywood) – Banned in the Video Nasties debacle.

WOMEN OF CELLBLOCK NINE, THE**

- Canada: (CIC, \$9.95)

Unbearable Films and Terrible Headaches

A Conversation with JESS FRANCO

**Conducted &
Translated by
Lucas Balbo**

During a trip to Madrid in 1986, Lucas Balbo interviewed Jess Franco at length about his film career. The lion's share of this conversation was originally published in the French magazine IMPACT and translated last year for publication in the British fanzine SHOCK XPRESS. The following excerpts – in which the Great Man pontificates about the contemporary Spanish cinema, his colleagues and some of his most obscure recent movies – were deemed “too esoteric” for both magazines and have not seen publication in any language until now.

The Spanish magazine FOTOGRAMAS published a survey on the popularity of Spanish actors – Francisco Rabal was most often named as the best Spanish actor, and Victoria Abril the best Spanish actress. What do you think about this?

Oh, Victoria Abril... do you think she's that good?



Not especially, but that's what the survey said.

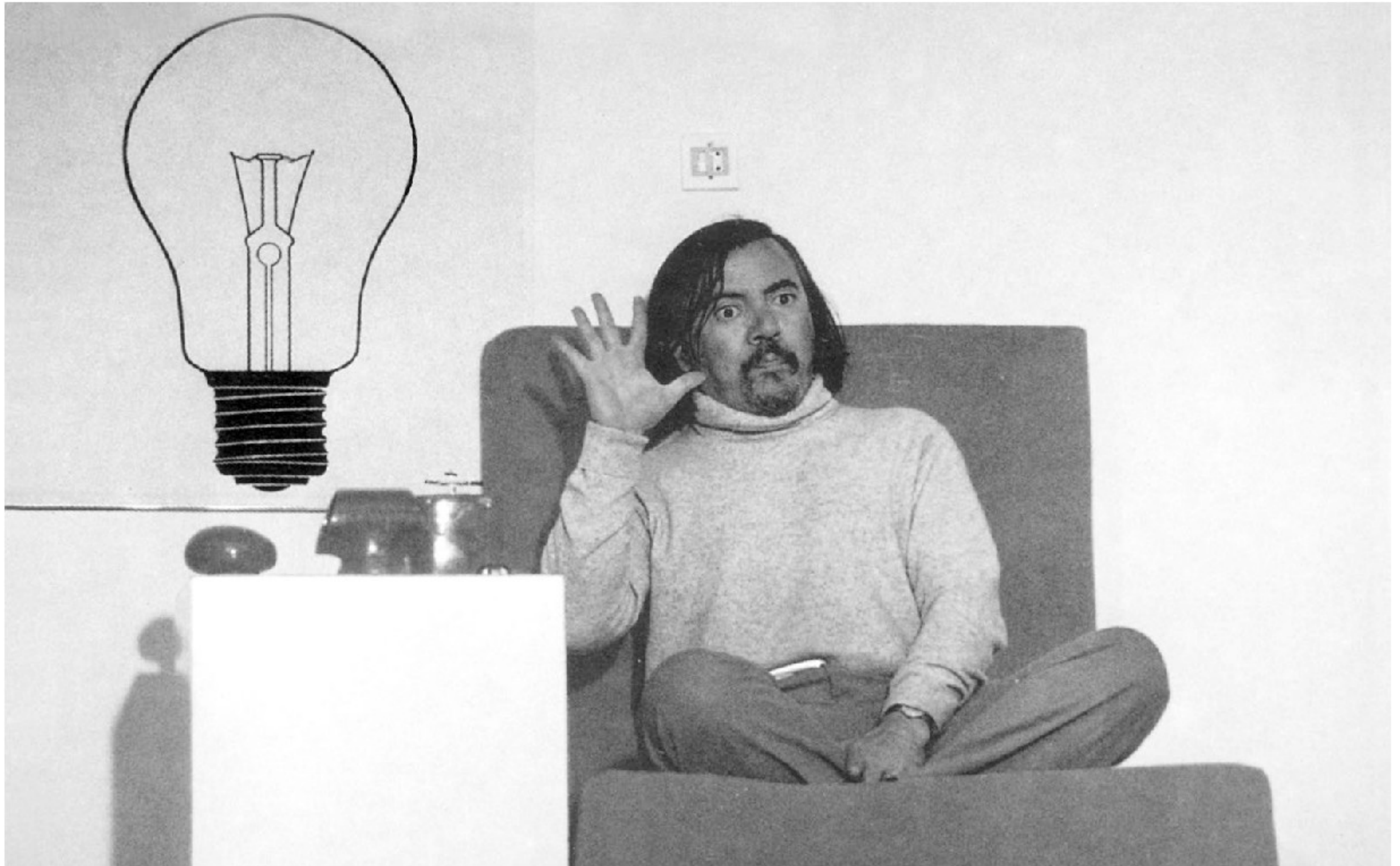
She was great when she began in films 10 years ago, but now she's kind of stuck-up. All-right, she's good-looking, but to say she's the best... She lives with a Frenchman she met

working as an assistant director while making a film in Portugal.

Francisco Rabal, I think, is very good, as a matter of fact. Better than when he was a young man in his Bunuel period. He has matured, he now has an interesting face; he's much more interesting now. He's not exactly handsome, but his face is unusual. For my money, the best Spanish actor is Fernando Fernan-Gomez.

What do you think about the Pedro Almodovar phenomenon?

I find Almodovar very simpatico. He has the courage to show his public who he really is: homosexual, transvestite, someone who sings off-key, able to do



How many scripts can you shoot in a week, Jess?

anything in front of people. He's someone I really admire in this way. Bravo! I like his earlier films better than **Matador**, because now I think he's beginning to become too serious. With **Matador**, he thinks he is William Wyler! I think he now feels obliged to make films that way, but I preferred him filming nuns walking tigers in their garden [**DARK HABITS** aka **Entre Tieneblas**] and his first scatological film **Pepa, Luci, Bom y otras Chicas del Monton** ["Pepa, Luci, Bom and Other Girls from the Masses"]. It's really excessive, but excessive in the best sense of that word.

The problem is, this country doesn't permit him to continue being that way; it forces him to work within the system. Lina and I recently saw him on a TV talk show, where they asked him, "How did you find the ideas for **Matador**?" He answered, "I think that the bullfighter is caught between the extremes of love and violence." No! It's really stupid, if you ask me. He shouldn't bend to the system; he should continue to make his cheap, little, marginal films – cheap, but sensational! That doesn't mean I don't like what he does today, but I find his personality more interesting in those earlier films, culturally speaking. If Almodovar thinks he is Carlos Saura-bis [a low-budget version of Saura], it's sad.

It's rather like Fernando Colomo. There was once a new kind of film being made by Madrid's New Wave directors, people like Colomo or Jose Luis Puebla, who

started out making sincere, spontaneous, funny films, with different kinds of actors – not very good ones, but capable actors – and then they turn out pretentious films like [Colomo's] **El Caballero de Dragon!** The problem is that the government doesn't allow them to express themselves. They encourage only the making of pompous films with messages.

Marco Ferrari was in Spain, working as a salesman for a lighting company called "Dianido", and he really became interested in cinema by visiting film sets. He did his first few features here. I remember a day when he was preparing a film, during an intellectual *cineaste* meeting, like Saura, Mario Camus, and other such people. Ferrari and I were talking outside the meeting room and as the directors left, Ferrari asked each of them, "When you go outside, please leave any 'messages' on this chair!" Then he said to Saura, "Listen, I'm beginning to make a film on Monday and I have no message. Don't you have even a little message I could use, maybe one which you've already used and may not need anymore?" And that's how the official Spanish cinema goes on! For example, when you see Visconti's first films – like the one with Massimo Girotti, Alain Delon and Annie Girardot, **ROCCO AND HIS BROTHERS** – they were better than his Verdi operas. But everybody thinks Visconti is a genius when they see Dirk Bogarde [in **DEATH IN VENICE**] with his

clownlike makeup dripping...

However, there are some good Italian directors – Dino Risi, for example. Even Francesco Rosi, who is more politically assertive; I like his film *Uomini contri* with Alain Cuny. I like his films better than any of Visconti's; I also prefer people like Lattuada in his debut, or Cottafavi and Freda, who really had a sense of rhythm, of montage, of spectacle and "art." But now we must endure the Brothers Taviani who are really boring, boring to death. People sit there groaning for two hours. When they get outside, they say [whining] "It's really beautiful – a bit boring, a bit heavy – but... it had to be said." People take everything too seriously, don't you think? I can't remember who said, "Masterpieces are never made with the intention of making a masterpiece." We make a film and, afterwards, maybe it becomes a masterpiece but, in Spain, most directors think they are *making* a masterpiece. Every shot for them must be perfect and, in the end, this only results in unbearable films and terrible headaches.

You returned to Spain in 1980; how would you say the intellectual climate here has changed since then?

It hasn't changed at all, except possibly in outward appearance. For example, all the music critics attend the Madrid Jazz Festival, but they don't understand it at all. We went there once or twice and the acoustics were horrible, the sound was badly distorted, and the microphones didn't work – *real hell*. Yet everybody applauded! Especially when a musician was showing off, but never when real musicians were playing very good music – then nobody understood. Things only change in appearance when you scratch their surfaces...

What do you think of Howard Vernon's career?

Lately, he appeared in a lot of German and Swiss TV programs. I think Vernon can't complain. He has always lived the way he wanted to. He's never been ambitious, or tried to become a star. He decided to live according to his own rhythm and in his own manner, and in this way, he has succeeded. He is a really sensational actor, a wonderful character, very nice and intelligent. He really chooses what he wants to do. Howard's example is close to mine. He's marginal because he chooses to be...

Klaus Kinski is also very good, but his part in COUNT DRACULA is very small, only three or four minutes.

No, you probably saw a badly edited video version. He was playing Renfield, and I lengthened the part especially for him. It's as important a part as those played by Herbert Lom or Paul Muller. One of the most

recent films in which Klaus appeared was shot here in Spain, *El Caballero de Dragon*, but don't bother seeing it. I'm sure there are more beautiful things to see in the *streets* than in this film. It's real bullshit, a very pretentious film. Klaus only did it for the money. He had a very small part and stayed only a week for the shooting. He fought with the director, grabbing him by his beard. Klaus is a very nice guy, very intelligent, and when he acts like that, it's because he's standing in shit and maybe he reacts more readily to this than some of the other people around him...

You might say there is almost a Franco school, because you've gotten a lot of people started in the film industry here...

Candy Coster, which is a pseudonym for Lina Romay, directed four films, but you can hardly call this "my school." Unfortunately, some people I've worked with before, like my nephew Ricardo, have had bad careers or films that didn't work.

Is *El Camino Solitario* ("The Only Path," 1983) a re-edited version of *Le Chemin Solitaire* ("The Lonely Path," 1973), which you made for Eurocene?

No, it's an entirely new film which I shot here in Madrid, and it doesn't incorporate any material from the earlier film. Besides, in the old one, I had nothing to do with producing it, whereas the new film was entirely my production.

Is *La Casa de las Mujeres Perdidas* ("The House of Fallen Women," 1982) a horror film?

No, but it's a very bizarre film, a story of manners – BAD manners! It looks like Bunuel's **THE DISCREET CHARM OF THE BOURGEOISIE**, yet it's totally different. It mostly concerns *la petite bourgeoisie*.

What about *Gemidos de Placer* ("Moans of Pleasure," 1982)?

I quite like that one. It's worth seeing. The film contains approximately 20 different shots. There is one shot running 300 meters – actually several – but this shot I'm thinking of begins outside by a pool and travels all around the outside of a house. So the film is really interesting on a technical level. Despite the use of long takes, the scenes still have rhythm. We rehearsed them many times, as if we were preparing a stage play; I had this idea to make the film with very few set-ups, because the story begins at 7:00 in the evening and ends at dawn. There are a lot of connected scenes which unfold in "real time" and that is how I got this idea to make it with a minimum of cuts. Despite all this effort, almost no one saw the film. Of those who did, no one seemed to notice at all what I've just told you.

The Cut ting Room Floor VIDEOS RESTORED AND COMPARED



Manuel feels the truth of Quecho's aim during the camp attack sequence of CUT AND RUN.

CUT AND RUN
New World Video, \$73.95

Inferno in diretta
(CDE Compagnia Distribuzione Europea), Prices vary
Available from Video Mania and Italian-American video stores.

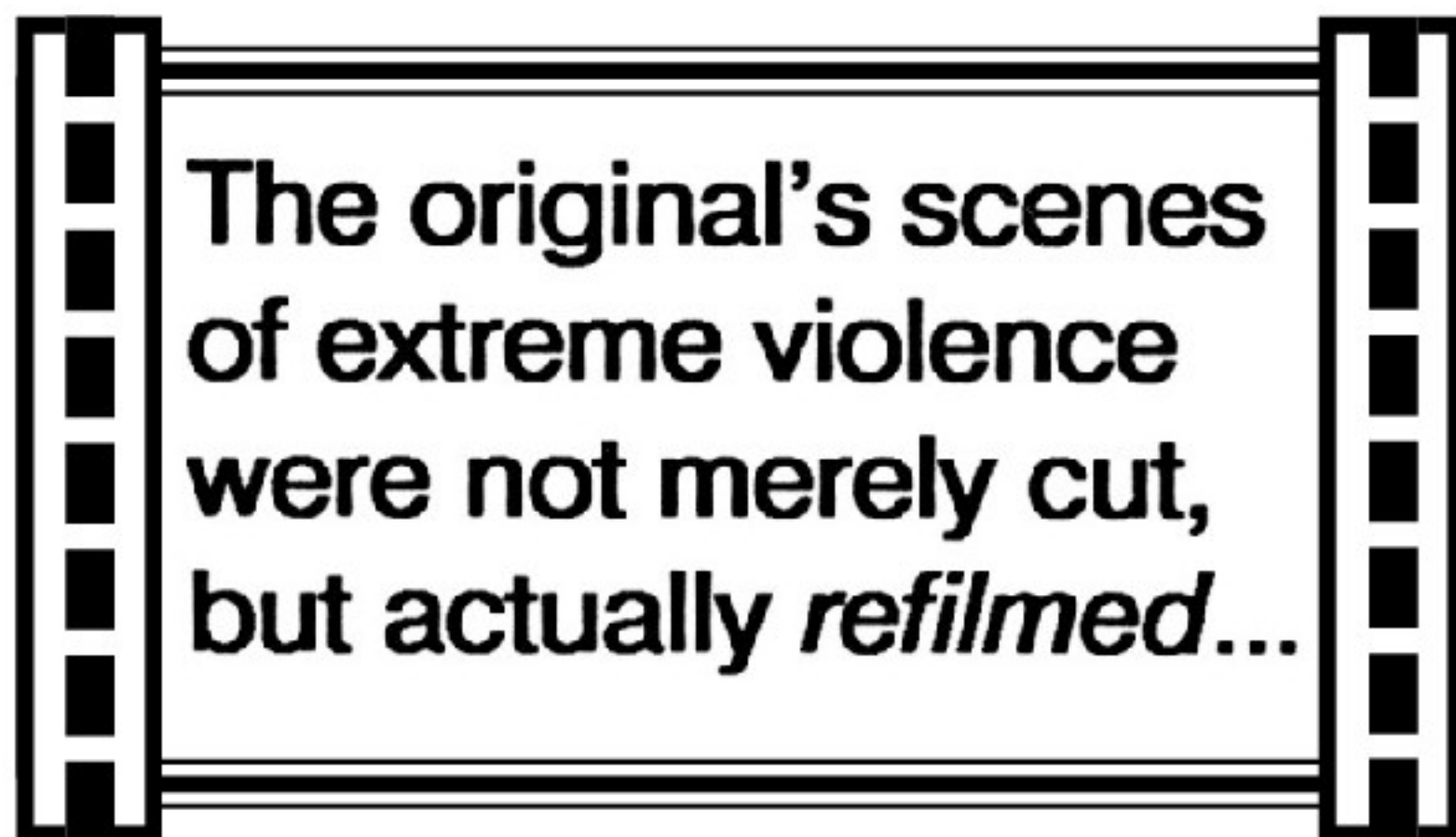
Stephen R. Bissette

ITALIAN DIRECTOR RUGGERO Deodato is best known for his cannibal horror films, the bastard classics **CANNIBAL HOLOCAUST** (1979) and **THE LAST SURVIVOR** [*Ultimo mondo cannibale*, 1976; available from Video City as **JUNGLE HOLOCAUST** and from Air Video as **CANNIBAL**]. While Deodato's most recent fare – Media's **THE BARBARIANS** [*I Barbari*, 1987], Vidmark's **PHANTOM OF DEATH** [*Un delitto poco comune*, 1988], and

Prism's **DIAL HELP** (1989) – are impoverished reminders of a once formidable filmmaker, New World Video's release of **CUT AND RUN** [*Inferno in diretta*, "Straight to Hell," 1984] is worth seeking out. It's a no-nonsense, action/suspense oddity combining a drug-trafficking adventure with echoes of the Guyana massacre, **APOCALYPSE NOW**, and Deodato's earlier cannibal epics.

The film follows two TV journalists (Lisa Blount and Leonard Mann) on a decidedly convoluted storyline, as

they trace a Florida drug murder to a Guyana-like cult operating in the jungles of South America by a renegade Green Beret, Colonel Horne (Richard Lynch). Stalking them is the grotesque Quecho (Michael Berryman) and his tribe of Indios, who never indulge in Deodato's trademark flesh-eating but are nevertheless responsible for much bloodshed that can be seen only in the film's Italian edition – which has happily surfaced as an unmarked bootleg cassette in a number of ethnic video stores.



Unlike many Italian horror films, which are often hacked by video companies to approximate an "R" rating, **CUT AND RUN** was specifically retailored for the US and UK markets by design; this is evident from the fact that many of the original's scenes of extreme violence were not merely cut, but actually *refilmed* by Deodato, to carefully soften the impact and content without disrupting the pacing or story. As a result, the running times are unexpectedly off-kilter: the more graphic version is actually shorter (**CUT AND RUN**: 87m, **Inferno in diretta**: 84m). The changes only affect the first 2/3rds of the film; the final movement is essentially the same in both versions.

What follows is a blow-by-blow account of what is missing – or replaced – from the New World Video edition.

[Hereafter **CUT AND RUN** is referred to as **CAR**, and **Inferno in diretta** as **IID**.]

Pre-credit Sequence

This sequence, which depicts the savage raid on Gonzales' camp by Quecho's tribe, contains 7 cuts and 1 substitution shot:

1. After Quecho raises one of his victims over his head and throws him off the deck, a *ZOOM toward the victim's back, impaled on a two-pronged wooden stick* is deleted.

Following the shots of two women being carried on deck and laid out, there is a shot of a laughing Indio stabbing one of the women (offscreen) with a

thin, bone-like dagger. What follows is severely cut from the US version:

2. *CLOSEUP of the bone dagger piercing the woman's left knee, spurting blood and pinning her to the deck.*

The shots of the laughing Indios looming over her remain, then:

3. *MEDIUM SHOT as her right leg is pierced, pinning her spreadeagled legs to the boards; HAND-HELD SHOT as her clothing is torn from her body, the camera moving over her pubic area and breasts as the natives fondle them and lick at her throat; SHOT of the other women's legs being pinned to the deck.*
4. *The next shot – of Quecho standing over the women – is CUT SHORT to keep their transfixed limbs out of view.*

After the arrival of Colonel Horne (Lynch), the Italian version follows a shot of his face flinching at the carnage with a *graphic view of the two nude women, pinned and writhing*. **CAR** makes use of a replacement shot, in which *the women have their torn clothing draped over them to conceal their breasts and pubic hair, the composition cropped to keep their pinned legs offscreen left*.

The final cut of the pre-credit sequence comes after a low angle shot of Quecho, swinging his machete to decapitate the two women:

5. *MEDIUM SHOT as Quecho climbs off-deck at screen right, as the camera pans left to deck level, lingering on the two beheaded women, then panning up from their corpses to the sky above.*

Main Titles

The main title sequence is complete in **CAR**, but there is an amusing continuity error as the Columbian woman with the fake baby (containing cocaine and a crying tape recorder) makes her way down the escalator. As she descends in medium closeup, we glimpse a curly-haired young man and his girlfriend behind her. In the next shot, at the bottom of the escalator, the couple steps off well *in front* of her!

Florida Apartment Sequence

This sequence, in which Fran (Blount) and Mark (Mann) discover and camcord the butchered bodies in the drug smugglers' apartment, was completely refilmed for **CAR**. Watch the apartment's walls throughout this scene, and you'll see that they are spotless until the final shot of the sequence, when Mark and Fran hear squad-cars approaching and flee the scene of the crime.



Indio prepares to pin his girl in the pre-credit sequence.

Suddenly, the walls behind them are generously *splattered with blood* – as they are throughout the *entire* scene in **IID**! The substitutions in this sequence are as follows:

In **IID**, after Mark enters the room with his camcorder and says, “Oh my God,” we see *the Columbian woman dead on the floor, her breasts and pubic area covered with blood, her legs spread apart with bone daggers through her knees. The fireplace and walls behind her are splashed with gore.* **CAR** substitutes a shot of her body discreetly covered by torn black clothing, her legs out of frame and the apartment walls clean.

As Mark films Fran’s commentary (“Perhaps the worst nightmare is lived by those who deal...”) in **IID**, *the camera smoothly glides over the carnage, now including two bloodied male bodies.* **CAR** shows the bodies also, but here they are less bloodied, with a newspaper coyly concealing the gore on the body of the man nearest the woman’s corpse. *The shot continues in IID, the camera smoothly passing over the woman’s nude corpse, noting puddles of gore on the floor beside her, then lingers on the daggers piercing her knees.* **CAR** takes a different approach, in that the camerawork is no longer graceful and indulgent, but rather furtive and hand-held. The eyes of the dead woman – covered as before – are closed. (The continuity-minded will note that her body is *more* covered in this final view than in all the previous shots!)

Naturally, by keeping the detail of the women’s impaled legs offscreen, **CAR** forfeits the unspoken link between the atrocities depicted in the pre-credits attack and the carnage discovered in the Florida apartment – a crucial story element lost on US viewers.

One final difference appears at the close of this sequence, as Fran and Mark’s dialogue continues over the shot of the van driving down the highway in **IID**.

Manuel’s Rape of Ana

This sequence is somewhat truncated in **CAR**, which scraps the following shots:

1. *OPENING SHOT of Manuel, sweating, forcing himself into Ana.*
2. *TIGHT LEFT-TO-RIGHT SHOT as camera pans up their legs, past Manuel’s thrusting hips and Ana’s bare breasts, coming to a stop on her perspiring, vacant face, as she tries to separate herself from what is happening.*

Both versions of the scene retain Tommy’s (Willie Aames) accidental sighting of the rape through the window of Ana’s hut. However, in **IID**, *his moan is added to the soundtrack.* **CAR** crops the shot of Manuel dismounting Ana to keep her nipples offscreen.

Quecho Kills Guard

Two cuts from this scene:

1. *CLOSEUP frontal view of Quecho’s dagger sinking into the guard’s throat is cut.*
The next two shots remain, albeit in accelerated form; Quecho swings his machete and –
2. *CLOSEUP of the guard’s midsection as it splits open, his hands struggling to hold back a torrent of vitals.*

The Camp Attack

The beginning of Quecho and the Indios' attack on Vlado's (John Steiner) camp is inexplicably cut from **CAR**:

1. *Vlado discovers one of his guards seated, apparently dead. He kicks the body out of the chair, the corpse rolling over to reveal Quecho's dagger in its throat.*

With this scene missing, we don't know why Vlado runs into the main shack to tell Manuel and the others, "We're being hit!"

After Manuel flees into the field and receives a blow-dart in the throat, Quecho's unnamed comrade is shown standing. Three subsequent shots appear in **IID**:

2. *Quecho's confederate swings his machete; explicit decapitation shot as Manuel's head sails away, the stump of his neck spurting blood; Manuel's head rolling to a stop among the reeds.*

And soon after:

3. *Vlado tries to hold the fort in a straw hut with a fellow soldier, whose back is momentarily against the wall; CLOSEUP of the soldier's abdomen, as the tip of a machete suddenly pokes through his belly, spurting blood as the CAMERA PANS UP to his face to capture his death; Vlado turns and fires his machine-gun; machine-gun fire riddles the body of the dead soldier, still pinned to the wall of the hut by the machete blade.*

Ana's Discovery of Manuel's Body

Remember, Manuel has not been previously decapitated in the US edition. In **CAR**, Ana falls into the reeds beside Manuel's body – his *entire* body – shown in the foreground of the shot, his eyes lifelessly staring, his throat pierced by a dart. **IID** has Ana tripping over Manuel's decapitated body, stumbling onto his staring, severed head, and screaming.

The First Telecast

Mark and Fran's first telecast from the ravaged camp, on the morning after the massacre, is staged completely differently in the two versions. The camera moves in two dolly shots of continuous, right-to-left movement as they walk through the corpse-strewn camp.

In **IID**, after Fran reports "We've been looking for signs of life... all we've found so far, however, are

corpses," *they walk by a man's body, spreadeagled on the ground. His right leg is missing, his right arm hacked off and laid beside its bloodied stump, a vulture perched on his chest.* (In **CAR**, the body is whole and unbloodied, and there is no vulture in sight.) **IID** continues with Fran and Mark passing behind a tree in the foreground, to which a man has been gorily pinned by a machete protruding from his chest. (**CAR** shows the same man simply leaning against the tree, dead, his shirt splashed with blood.)

The second dolly shot begins in both versions as the reporters proceed to walk into a hut in the BG, the camera lingering on a man's body propped in the fork of a tree in the FG, his throat torn open, a bloody gash extending from his shoulder across his chest. **IID** includes in the shot a vulture's head and neck silhouetted in the FG, noisily feeding on the wound. (No vulture is shown in **CAR**.)

Drawn and Quartered

CAR has 5 cuts during the original's most harrowing gore sequence, as Tommy witnesses Vlado being ripped in two by an Indio trap of spring-laid trees. **CAR** is altered so that it seems Tommy mercifully shoots and kills Vlado just as the trap is sprung. No such luck, Vlado, in **IID**:

Tommy raises the handgun, Vlado's trussed leg visible in the left FG:

1. *FULL SHOT of Vlado tied spreadeagle as Tommy pulls down on his leg, trying to free him but inadvertently springing the trap.*

The next three shots remain intact in **CAR**, ending with a shot of Tommy grimacing, as if to fire his gun (the sound effect of a gunshot is added here to **CAR**, making it sound like he *does* fire the revolver), then:

2. *Explicit FULL SHOT of Vlado ripped in two, from crotch to sternum; Tommy turns and flinches and Vlado's blood sprays over him.*

CLOSEUP SHOT of Vlado's face, bent backwards in agony, as blood streams over it from his mouth [and his split body]. Coming as this does, in the US print, after the sound of the gunshot, it appears Tommy has shot Vlado in the head, putting him out of his misery before he is drawn and quartered. Then:

3. *MEDIUM SHOT as Tommy turns and runs into the BG to the edge of the clearing, Vlado's leg visible in the FG; Tommy turns and finally fires the handgun in the direction of Vlado's dangling limb.*

Soonafter, Mark stumbles on Vlado's body, and his first glimpse of it – a grisly MEDIUM SHOT – is intact in all prints. **IID** follows this, however, with a

*Tommy (Willie Aames) witnesses
Vlado's (John Steiner) horrible
fate in CUT AND RUN's most
harrowing scene.*



stomach-turning *CLOSEUP* of Vlado's split corpse, a vulture yanking tripe from the gory cavity with its beak.

Ana's Death

During Fran and Mark's second transmission by the river, a tree limb suddenly drops into view with Ana's body lashed to it. She is apparently dead. Fran scrambles to a nearby tree and retches. Mark lifts Ana's body and whispers, "God," at which point *IID* includes the following material:

1. *CLOSEUP* of Ana's face. Horribly, she is still alive. She is pincushioned with blowdarts. Two of Quecho's bone daggers transfix her throat from either side. She tries to speak through her pain, then dies, eyes open wide. *CUT TO* Mark, cradling her body.
The final third of *CUT AND RUN* is intact, excepting two brief shots following Colonel Horne's ritualistic suicide-by-decapitation:
2. *POV SHOTS* as Mark films the aftermath of the beheading; *CLOSEUP* of Horne's bloody neck, the camcorder searching for, then *ZOOMING* on, the severed head before the pyre is set aflame.

That's all, Watchdogs. Sorry, when Vargas is hit by the train, *Inferno in diretta* only shows his hat hitting the rails, too. No further degradations are lavished on our hero and heroine, much as they may deserve them. And Willie Aames (of ABC-TV's old show *EIGHT IS ENOUGH*), sad to say, survives his jungle ordeal in both versions – a clear sign that Deodato was beginning to slouch. It's been "straight to hell" for him ever since, from prematurely aging Michael York bashing middle-aged, balding men in public restrooms to bimbos getting blown-up by telephone.

Ruggero, we hardly knew you!



THE LAST moments of

GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE

(Academy) seem to constitute a shot-for-shot recreation of the closing moments of Michael Reeves' **THE CONQUEROR WORM** (Thorn/HBO).

CARNIVAL OF SOULS

Panorama Entertainment,
theatrical reissue
VidAmerica, \$59.95

Jeff Smith

For many years, the only available version of Herk Harvey's **CARNIVAL OF SOULS** has been a slightly truncated version prepared by the film's distributor, Herts-Lion, prior to its theatrical release. There is some discrepancy over running times; the shortened version (which was sold to TV markets and became the standard version of the film) is usually listed at 80m, but actually runs only 73; the restored version, generally touted as 91m, clocks-in at exactly 80. Either a longer version of *CARNIVAL* remains to be seen or, more likely, the running times were mis-reported at the time of the film's release and the mistake has perpetuated through the years.

The Lawrence, Kansas-made film has finally been released in its original version – in a newly-struck 35mm print which premiered at the USA Film Festival in Dallas, Texas (April 13-19, 1989). Though bootleg video releases of uneven quality are being circulated, an authorized video release, taken from the original 35mm negative, is now available.

The cuts appear to have been made in an effort to streamline the film, though several scenes were omitted in their entirety. The following is a rundown of the cuts in their sequential order:

1. In the pre-credits scene, there is a brief cut-away shot of the girl seated in the middle of the car – never clearly seen in the shortened version – exchanging a worried glance with Mary Henry (Candice Hilligoss), as the male passenger of the other car encourages them to "Rev it up!"
2. After Mary leaves the organ factory, there is a brief dialogue exchange between the factory manager and the workman, mainly commenting on Mary's odd behavior. "I don't know about that girl," the manager begins. "Three days ago, she was the only one of three girls to survive an accident. You'd think she'd feel something like humbleness or gratitude."
"Well," the worker says, "if she's got a problem, it'll go along with her."

This scene, rather clumsily, tries to characterize Mary through the observations of others; because the dialogue is heavy-handed and the actors' delivery uneven, it simply doesn't work. The film is generally better off without this scene, the very end of which – as the manager walks away and the worker runs a piece of board over a saw – remains in the shortened version.



3. After the sight of the Man (Herk Harvey) causes her to run off the road, Mary spends a few seconds trying to get her car started again.
4. Shortly after being run off the road, Mary pulls into a gas station and asks the attendant about the strange pavilion she saw on the way in.

"Oh, you mean the old bath house," the attendant explains. "That used to be a pretty ritzy place in the old days. Then the lake went down and they made a dance hall out of it. Then they put those buildings up down there, made some sort of a carnival there for awhile. That's years ago, though. Just stands out there now."

This oddly omitted scene is the only one in which we're given any information about Saltair, as well as the only scene in which the pavilion is referred to as a "carnival," thus tying-in with the title. The scene runs less than a minute, and would have had little effect on the film's pacing.

5. The midsection of the film is unchanged. The next cut comes after Mary has fought off the advances of amorous neighbor John Linden (Sidney Berger). The next morning, the psychiatrist (Stanley Leavitt) comes downstairs after paying Mary a visit and stops to chat with Mrs. Thomas (Frances Feist), her landlady.

"I'm sure glad you happened around," she tells him. "I was gonna call somebody, but I's afraid I'd have to pay the bill."

"I came on purpose," the doctor reveals. "I've been thinking about her since she left my office yesterday. What's she been up to?"

"Only the Devil knows that. I heard her movin' things all around that room all last night. Never heard such goin's-on! And she wouldn't let me in her room this morning."

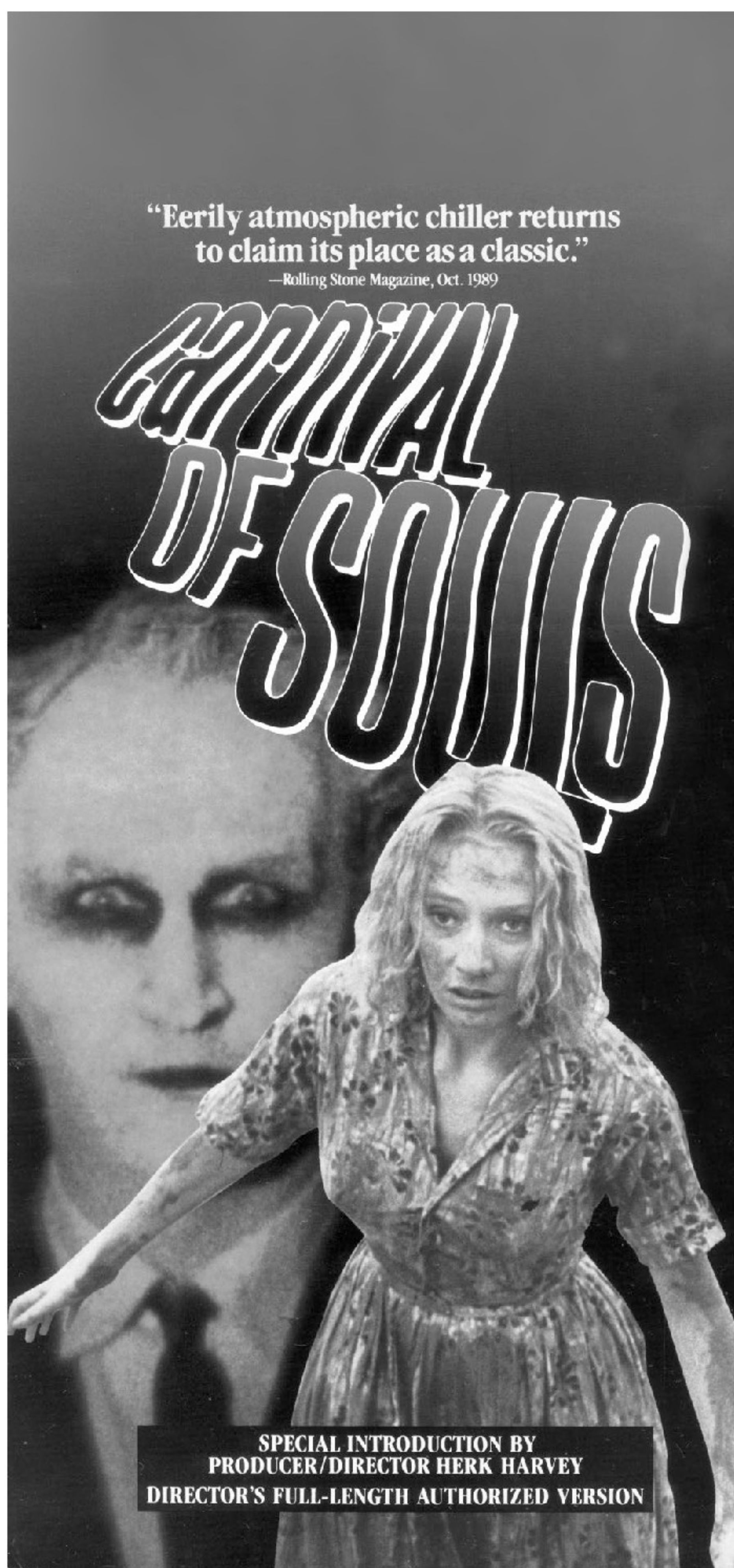
"She's a strange one," the doctor concurs. "She absolutely refuses my help. I can't say that I blame her; there's something about her that completely baffles me. I've urged her to call upon me if she feels she needs help, and I hope she will."

"I can't let her stay in this house."

"You won't have to worry about that," the doctor says. "She's determined to leave the city and she wants to get away as soon as possible."

"I hope she *does* leave," Mrs. Thomas adds.

To which the doctor intones gravely, "I hope she *can*."



Facing: Mary (Candice Hilligoss) is mysteriously drawn to the Saltair Pavilion.

Again, the cut involves two outside characters telling us about Mary and the scene doesn't work, though it is interesting for showing Mrs. Thomas to be more callous than she previously seemed to be. The exchange basically verbalizes actions implicit in previous and successive scenes, and therefore seems extraneous.

6. During Mary's second "reality break," there is a brief cut in which she dodges an approaching van whose driver doesn't see her.
7. At the end of her reality break, Mary again visits the psychiatrist in a scene considerably lengthened in the restored version. "I don't belong in the world, that's what it is," Mary explains to her doctor's turned back. "Something separates me from other people. Everywhere, they're everywhere. They're not going to let me go. Everywhere I turn, there's something blocking my escape. He's trying to prevent me from living. He's trying to take me back somewhere. I can't fight anymore – I don't know what's *real* anymore!"

Arguably, this scene explains too much, makes the nature of Mary's predicament too explicit, whereas the earlier ambiguities made the situation more mysterious. I also think the scene, when twice as long, spoils the gag of the doctor swivelling around in his chair to reveal himself as the Man; we're given too long to figure it out, and the doctor's face is hidden so long, we *know* something's amiss.

Though it may prove an unpopular view, I believe the shorter version of **CARNIVAL OF SOULS** ultimately works better than the restored edition. The shorter scenes and the bit at the gas station do not adversely affect the pace, but the three talking-head scenes might have been better left to the cutting room floor.

[A slightly different version of this article appeared in WET PAINT #26. Reprinted with the author's permission.]

VidAmerica has announced that their videocassette release of CARNIVAL OF SOULS will include a special 3m introduction hosted by the film's director, Herk Harvey.

To quote their press release, "In the style of Hitchcock and Serling, Harvey explains the genesis of the motion picture, his thoughts while filming and the story of its release and post-release history. His humor and candor provide a rare insight that adds a unique cachet to the film."

HERCULES AND THE CAPTIVE WOMEN

Rhino Video, \$19.95

Sinister Cinema, \$19.95

United American Home Video (LP), \$9.95

TransAmerica Video, \$N/A

HERCULES CONQUERS ATLANTIS
Videoform (UK-PAL), OP

HERCULES IN THE HAUNTED WORLD

Rhino Video, \$19.95

Sinister Cinema, \$19.95

Saturn Video, \$N/A

HERCULES AT THE CENTER OF THE EARTH
Videoform (UK-PAL), OP

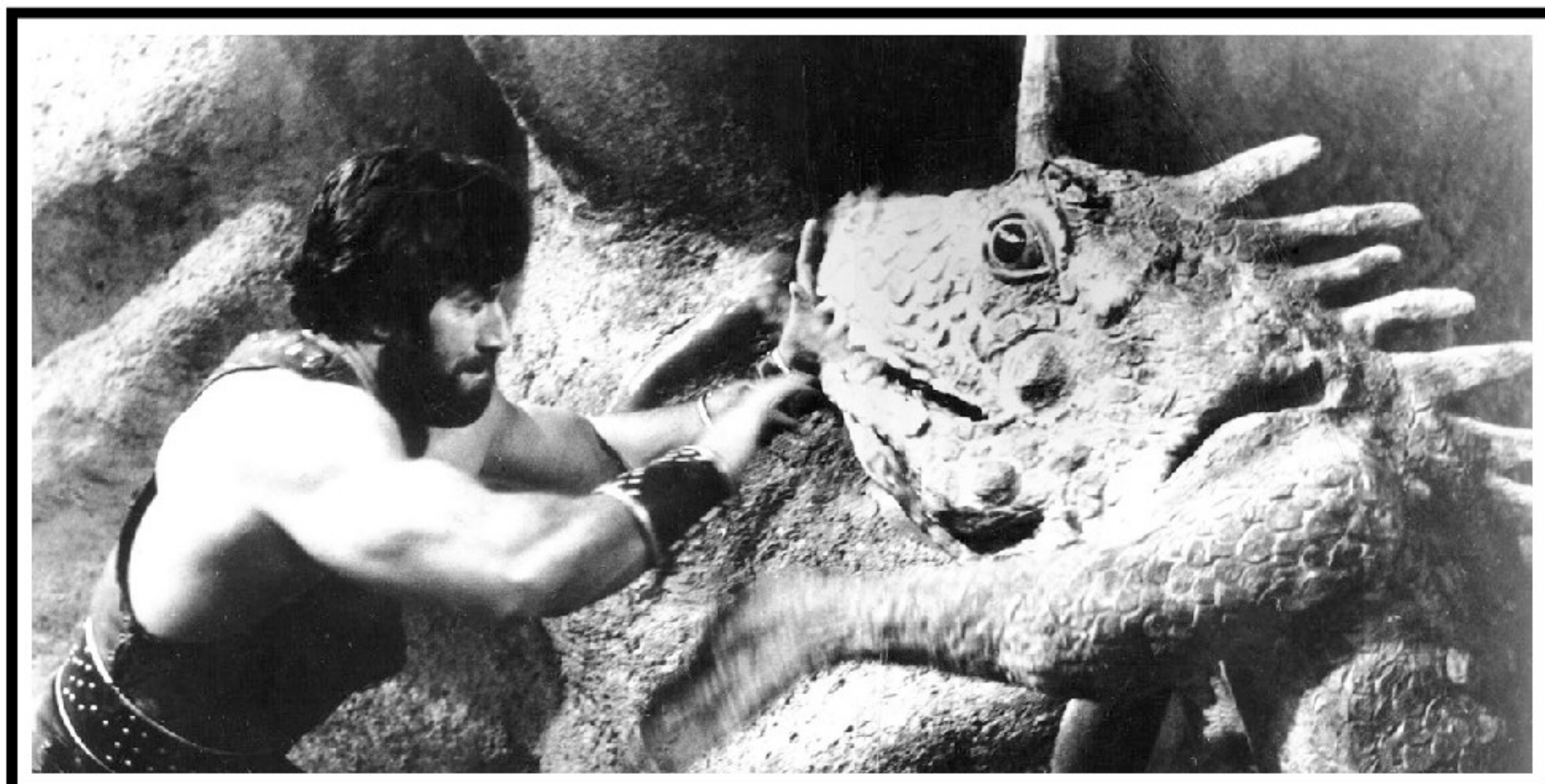
Tim Lucas

Rhino Video's recent release of the English version of Vittorio Cottafavi's *Ercole alla conquista della Atlantide* (1961) follows three "public domain" releases of the film on video last year. Rhino's version was issued as a twin-pack release with Mario Bava's **HERCULES IN THE HAUNTED WORLD** [*Ercole al centro della terra*, 1961] – the two being hyped as "The Pec Pack" – at \$39.95, but has been seen for sale separately at the price listed above. All these tapes are intact but Rhino's higher-profile copy warrants comparison with the others, particularly that released by Sinister Cinema.

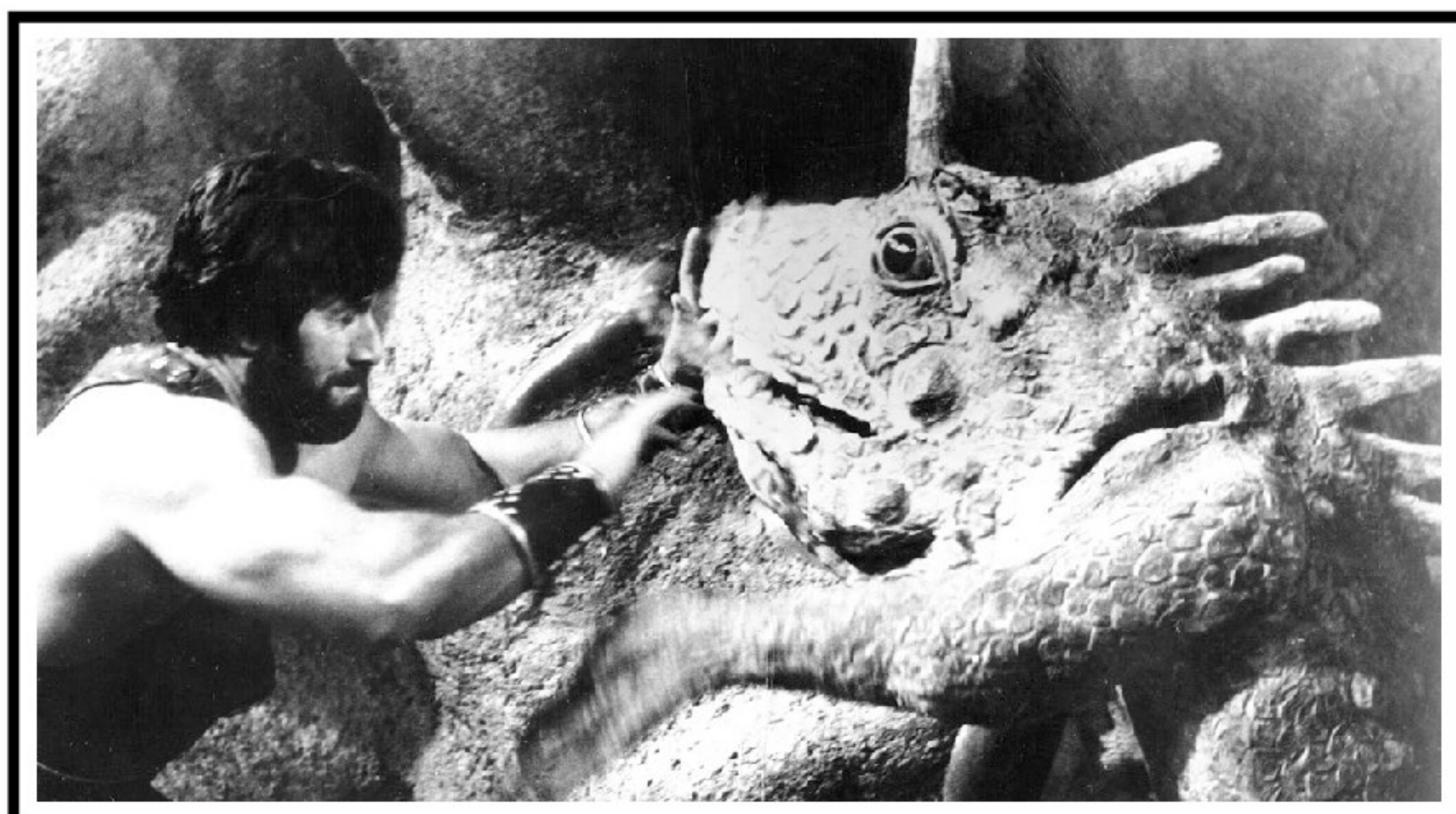
At first sight, Rhino's version may seem an improvement over Sinister's release but, be warned, this impression is deceptive. Chained from a 16mm print, Rhino's copy is indeed more richly colorful than Sinister Cinema's faded, sometimes sepia, edition; however, Sinister's transfer was made from a 35mm original and doesn't suffer from the flurry of scratches that assail Rhino's print at every reel change.

HERCULES AND THE CAPTIVE WOMEN was originally filmed in Techniscope and Super Technirama 70 – a screen ratio of 2.05:1. The film's British video release, under its original English title of **HERCULES CONQUERS ATLANTIS**, retains this widescreen framing by presenting the action inside a handsome, unusually narrow strip. Still a growing operation, Sinister Cinema's arsenal of anamorphic accessories remains limited to only 1.33:1 (16mm/TV) and 1.85:1 (US Widescreen or Vistavision) lenses so, while the Technirama 70 image remains somewhat

Hercules may defeat the evil Proteus, but can he survive the threat of screen ratio diminishment?



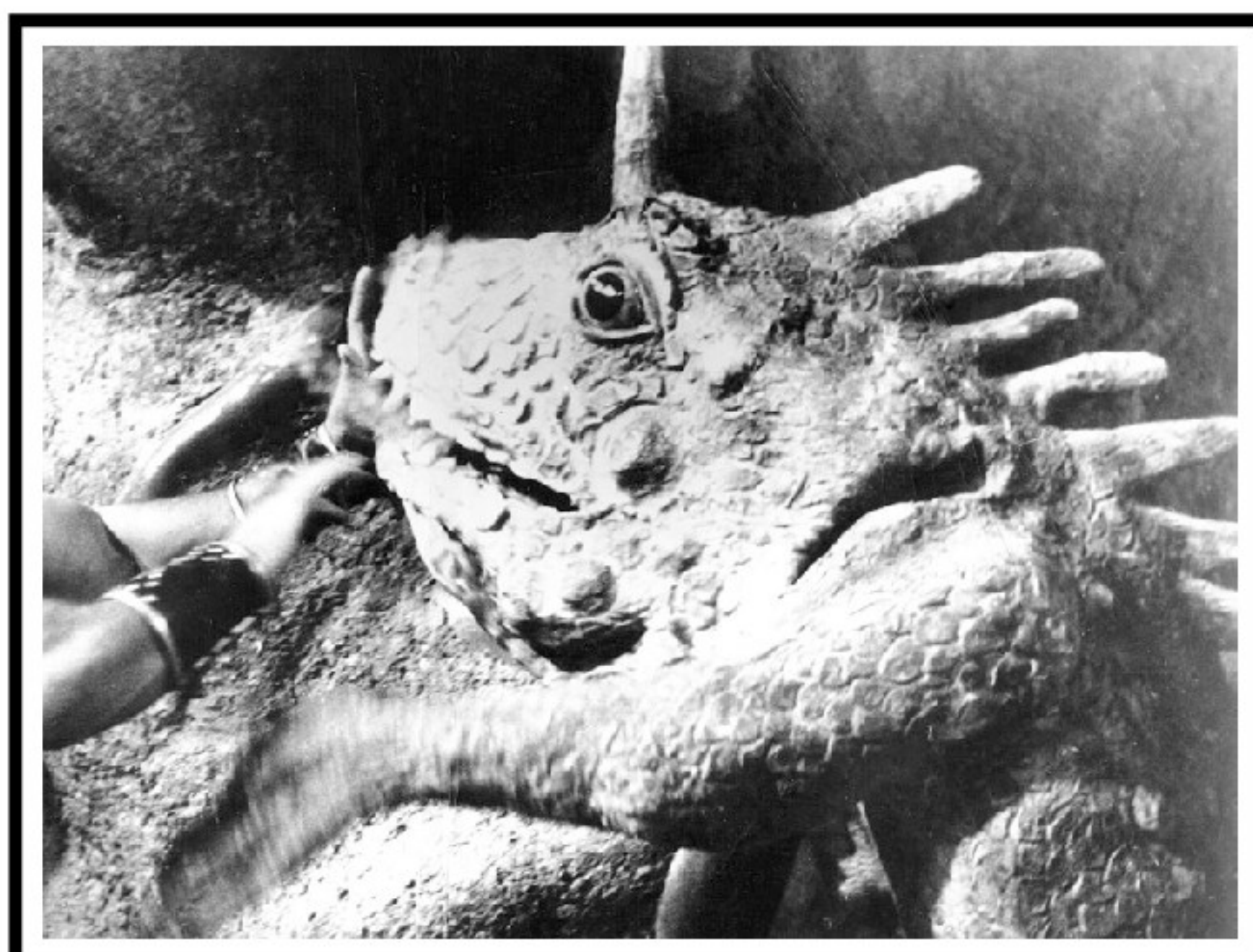
Techniscope/Super Technirama 70 – 2.05:1



Widescreen or Vistavision – 1.85:1

squeezed on their version, it's still watchable and much truer to the film's original framing and editing – two points which the Rhino tape distorts beyond belief. [Incidentally, it's amusing to see in Sinister's tape that the shots of erupting volcanoes at the film's climax *aren't* squeezed; this stock footage was apparently lensed in 1.85:1 and, while it looks perfect here, would have appeared *stretched* on theater screens!]

I don't know whether Rhino or their 16mm print is to blame, but their tape's aspect ratio seems worse than 1.33:1; the camera doesn't glide from side to side within shots, it imposes edits even on shots that aren't panoramic, which would carry us only from one side of the screen to somewhere in the middle. Two of the film's most impressive deep-focus action compositions – respectively charting the



16mm or TV – 1.33:1

right-to-middle flights of a spear hurled into a wall, and a knife thrown at someone's back – appear in the Rhino tape with edits halfway through the trajectories! The Rhino version also cuts short the end credits, deleting a final crowded card identifying the film's story and screenwriters, director of photography, editor, original music composer, and the photographer of those elastic volcano shots.

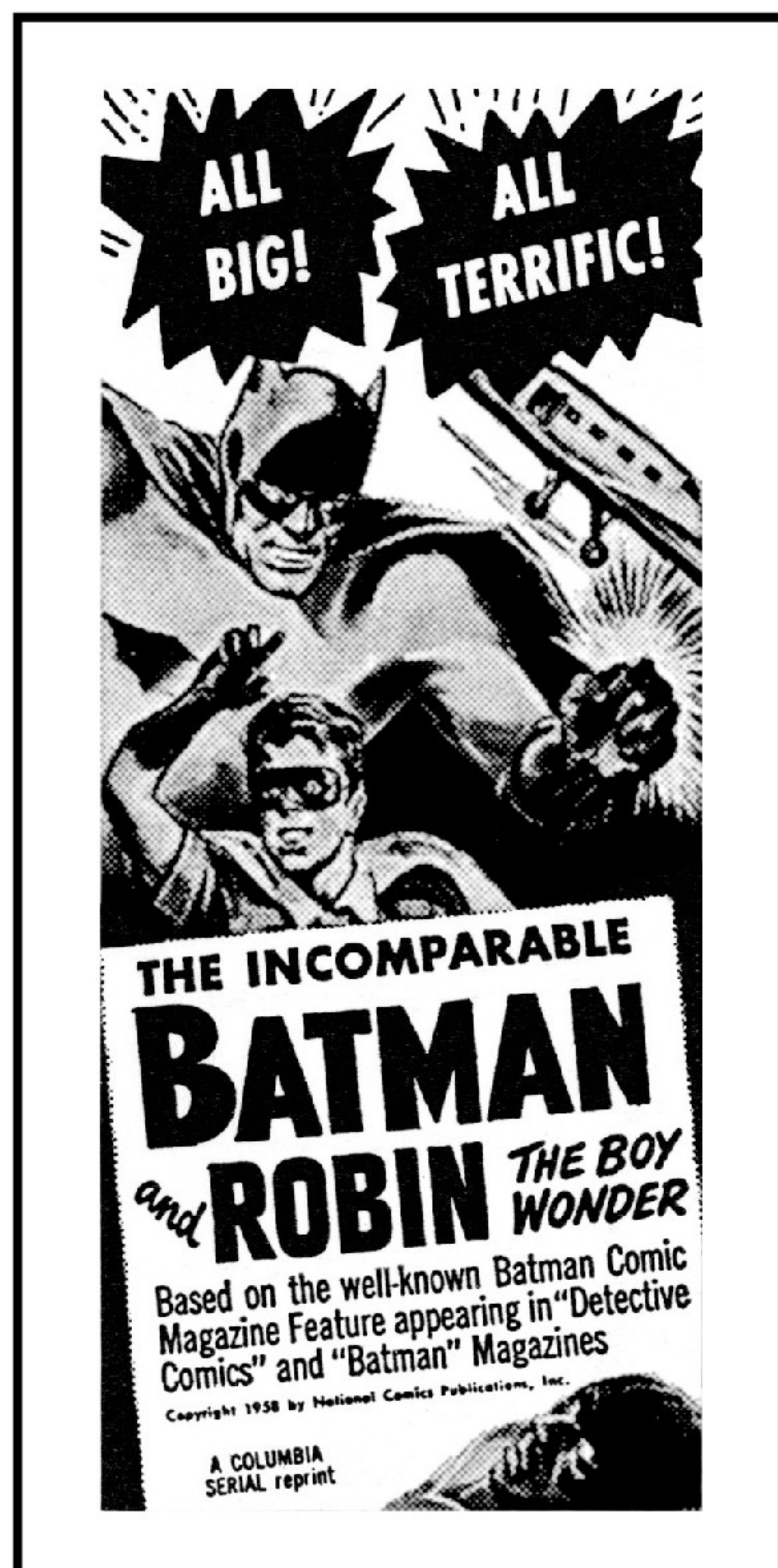
For the record, United American's far more affordable copy is recorded at the LP (4-hour) speed, but struck from a far less scratchy, more color-secure (perhaps IB-Technicolor), 16mm print. The box art, however, is atrocious. I was unable to secure a copy of the TransAmerican Video edition – can any readers out there offer an appraisal of it?

Aside from preserving the film's original screen ratio, the British **HERCULES CONQUERS ATLANTIS** does not employ the American version's opening credit sequence (by Filimation Associates) of the Atlantean fresco, followed by Leon Selznick's narration over footage of a crudely-rendered map of Thebes. Instead, it presents its full credits during an amusing, extended version of the introductory scene of the roughhousing (comedic fighting, soldiers falling in wine, etc.) surrounding Hercules' peaceful meal at the tavern. The British cassette's running time is also extended: 101m as compared to the American version's 93.

The American prints yield some interesting Watch-dog trivia: while the end credits list Gino Marinuzzi as the film's composer, the opening credits cite Gordon Zahler of General Music Corp. for "Music Supervision." As often happened to Italian imports in the early 1960's, Marinuzzi's score was wiped to facilitate the film's dubbing and replaced with library tracks – in this case, material from the Universal archives. Recognizable during Hylas and Timotheus' rescue of Ismene (and the destruction of Atlantis) are passages from Hans Salter's **THE WOLF MAN** score (1941) and Joseph Gershenson's music for **THE CREATURE FROM THE BLACK LAGOON** (1955)! And if the sarcophagus where Antinea hides Androcles' body looks familiar, you may be remembering the prop from the embalming chamber scene in **HERCULES UNCHAINED** (1958)! Marinuzzi's music appears only on the PAL cassette.

As for the other half of Rhino's "Pec Pack," their copy of Bava's **HERCULES IN THE HAUNTED WORLD** is also culled from a somewhat scratchy 16mm print, but it's altogether preferable to both Sinister's slightly incomplete print, and to the offensively ragged print released last year by Canada's Saturn Video (both of which lack the film's pre-credit Oracle sequence), marred only by poor contrast in the early scenes. Oddly enough, though the film was photographed in an even wider screen ratio than **CAPTIVE**

WOMEN – TotalScope 100 (2.35:1) – it is more capably scanned than its "Pec Pack" companion and, while visually cramped, at least doesn't feel *re-edited*. Rhino's complete transfer is most welcome, and whets one's appetite for the day when Americans are given a definite laserdisc transfer. The closest thing the world now has to this, or once had, is perhaps UK Videoform's out-of-print PAL cassette, entitled **HERCULES AT THE CENTER OF THE EARTH** – which was luminously colorful, impeccably letterboxed, and included one brief scene (actually a mere *shot*) not in domestic prints, of Hercules (Reg Park) returning to Icalia from Hades on horseback, riding through an arid landscape scattered with human skeletons. Woolner, the film's US distributors, must have saved a *bundle* by deleting that.



*Criminals are a
superstitious,
cowardly lot.*

*Here is an
image to strike
terror into their
hearts, from
**BATMAN
AND ROBIN.***



BATMAN AND ROBIN
Goodtimes Video (LP)
\$12.95 each (2 volumes)

Jeff Smith

Fans who rejoiced at the release of a pristine print of Sam Katzman's impoverished but fast-moving **BATMAN AND ROBIN** (1949) – the second serial based on Bob Kane's popular creation – will find their joy turned sour, once it becomes evident that an important chapter has been edited to squeeze the program onto a T-60 cassette.

A sequel to **BATMAN** (1943), **BATMAN AND ROBIN** stars Robert Lowery and John Duncan, respectively, in the title roles. Though well-paced, the serial is fairly routine, full of repetitive fisticuffs and cars tumbling over the sides of cliffs. It is also notorious for having the worst Bat-costume in movie history, with Lowery's Bat-ears sticking out at angles like Devil's horns.

Like most serials, Chapter 1 of **BATMAN AND ROBIN** ("**Batman Takes Over**") is about one-third longer than its subsequent chapters, a tradition granting a more indulgent introduction of the characters and establishment of the plot. The Goodtimes tape removes a full 8 minutes from Chapter 1, reducing its

original 27m running time to 19m. Worse, the cuts are ham-handed and seemingly arbitrary, the most bizarre excision being that of the scene in which the serial's villain – a mysterious, cloaked figure called The Wizard – first appears!

In the original print (cloudy dupes of which are available from several "public domain" video catalogues), two thugs make their way to The Wizard's underground hideout, where the hooded criminal outlines his plan: "With this [indicating his machine-controlling device] I'll be able to control everything that moves – even Man! We'll need a lot of diamonds to run this. The next job will be to *get* those diamonds!" With this scene missing, the Wizard's plan is left unclear and must be pieced together by implication. The editing also renders incomprehensible the subsequent series of diamond robberies committed by the Wiz's thugs. Incidentally, Volume One also deletes most of the opening credits originally appearing in Chapter 1, leaving only the title card and chapter title.

Fortunately, the subsequent chapters seem to be intact. While some may argue that 8 minutes of cuts in a 4-hour serial is negligible, it's still annoying to have the introduction to the piece reduced to such a jumbled mish-mash.

Goodtimes' motto, the box tells us, is "We Make Collectability a Way of Life." In the case of **BATMAN AND ROBIN**, these words have a hollow ring indeed.

Biblio Watchdog

The Velvet Alley Cat



ROD SERLING
THE DREAMS AND NIGHTMARES
OF LIFE IN THE TWILIGHT ZONE
Joel Engel
Contemporary Books, 353 pages
\$18.95 (hardcover)

THE TWILIGHT ZONE COMPANION
Revised & Expanded
30th Anniversary Edition
Marc Scott Zicree
Bantam/Spectra, 466 pages
\$12.95 (trade paperback)

Reviewed by Tim Lucas

Imagine spending four years of your life writing about someone markedly different than the subject who first inspired you.



HANKS TO MARC SCOTT

Zicree's near-perfect *THE TWILIGHT ZONE COMPANION*, I can pinpoint the exact date I fell in love with horror: November 11, 1960. The precise moment was probably 10:18 pm, when the long-silhouetted faces of the doctors and nurses of "**The Eye of the Beholder**" were exposed. I was four years old, up past my bedtime, and the grown-ups couldn't stop me from screaming; the only thing that finally stopped my caterwauling was turning off the old Zenith. I was barred from watching the show again till I was older, but I can remember occasionally hearing Marius Constant's closing theme music from my bed, its fretful violin strings sounding like a devil tiptoeing through the dark toward my room. I don't remember seeing *THE TWILIGHT ZONE* again until "**Nightmare at 20,000 Feet**" (October 11, 1963) when another face – pressed against an airplane window – also made me scream. But it was a *wiser* scream. By that time, I'd started reading *FAMOUS MONSTERS* and going to the movies.

This nostalgic overture is my roundabout way of saying that I feel a tremendous debt of gratitude to Rod Serling. I believe *THE TWILIGHT ZONE* marked the birth of the subconscious in the television medium; that, for me and many others, Serling himself personifies Horror the way Hitchcock personifies Suspense; and that Serling's TV scripts, even the worst of them, go a long way toward nominating this wiry, four-pack-a-day workhorse as the *conscience* of an often inconsiderate *genre*.

This said, Joel Engel's biographical *ROD SERLING: THE DREAMS AND NIGHTMARES OF LIFE IN THE TWILIGHT ZONE* left me seated in the sour presence of a stranger: a tormented, driven man plagued by inarticulate doubts and fears and hatreds; a man who ignored his wife and children in order to provide for them; a man in elevator shoes, who once nearly came to blows when he misunderstood an admirer's compliment that "No one writes as you do about The Little Man"; a man acclaimed for the equality and fair-mindedness of his plays, who was in fact a curt homophobe, fearful of butting horns with Senator Joseph McCarthy and the American Activities Committee; a writer so blocked and hungry for one last trip to

the Top that he betrayed a brother's confidence by revealing his aviation secrets in a teleplay – *THE DOOMSDAY FLIGHT* (1966) – that resulted in several successful airline extortion plots before it was finally withdrawn from syndication. That Serling remains, on this book's last page, a stranger is only partially his biographer's fault; imagine spending four years of your life writing about someone markedly different than the subject who first inspired you.

While Joel Engel cannot be blamed for Serling's shortcomings as a subject and human being, there are other blames which can be laid only at his door. Engel is capable of writing well – the author of an earlier book entitled *WAR STORIES*, his chapter about Serling's WWII duties in the Pacific is particularly vivid – but he tends to lose his position, making numerous factual and presentational errors, as the years and facts accumulate. Among his errors: 1950 is cited as the year both *I LOVE LUCY* and *SUPERMAN* debuted (their premieres were respectively in 1951 and 1953); Serling's option salary for *THE STRIKE* (an unfilmed project) is given as "seventy five hundred dollars" on page 124, and "seventy five thousand dollars" on page 142; a popular Sixties film's title is given as *OUR MAN FLYNT* (sic); and there's a repeat of the popular misconception that "no one wanted to hire Bela Lugosi after 1931 [because he had played] Dracula too well" (Lugosi actually made the majority of his films *after* 1931).

Engel also has an unedited tendency to repeat quotes, information and descriptions (Serling's hometown is repeatedly termed a "geographic womb"), as well as to drop fascinating subjects just as they begin to gain a focus of truth, such as Serling's loss of intimacy with his wife as his writing struggles ended, and the fact that he never wrote convincingly about women. The book is also chronologically skewed, in that an important event like the birth of Serling's first child isn't mentioned until she's six months old, and *FROM THE TWILIGHT ZONE* (the first of several books of short stories) appears full-grown out of nowhere, soon after we're told Serling had abandoned his plans to write fiction (p. 176). Engel also glosses over Serling's work for WKRC-TV's *THE STORM*, an early soap anthology series produced in Cincinnati, the structure of which

(viz., each week a different character would get caught up in a personal “storm”) directly influenced the format of THE TWILIGHT ZONE.

The life of any serious writer *is* his writing, yet it is Serling’s television writing – his work in the industry he described as “The Velvet Alley” – that gets most lost in the shuffle of deadlines and airdates, as if Engel himself lost interest in weeding through it. From the radio days of “Six-Gun Serling’s Western Jamboree” through the best episodes of NIGHT GALLERY, Engel never successfully explains how the facts of Serling’s life related to the touchstones of his writing. We’re told there were several merry-go-rounds in his hometown of Binghamton, NY, but are left to remind ourselves of the emotional role these amusements played in the TZ episodes “**Walking Distance**” and “**In Praise of Pip**”. In what is perhaps the key reminiscence of his book, Engel relates how Serling, when asked about his wartime experiences, always replied with what began as a heartfelt confession, until an unexpected punchline exposed (or reduced) his soul-baring to a joke. He’d set up a gripping story about his parachute missions, describe how these courageous exercises were usually flawed by the presence of some soldier’s unconquerable fear of jumping... then smile as he said they usually had to throw him out, kicking and screaming. To this reader’s mind, this anecdote is the key to the mystery Engel never solves; it strongly suggests that Serling was compulsively drawn to horror and fantasy themes as a means of exorcising his own dark, unconfontable memories of WWII. But he always backed away from the horror of that experience with humor, just as his scariest teleplays (or those he bought for TZ) always culminated in a punchline, a “stinger”, climaxes that raised our gooseflesh and our smiles at the same time: Anne Francis is actually a mannequin on leave, Burgess Meredith’s eyeglasses shatter, “To Serve Man” is a cookbook.

Just as the book fails to elucidate this likely truth, it also backs off from exploring the primal causes of Serling’s personal anger (unfortunately, his widow elected to be interviewed, but not for the record). The person Rod Serling was when no one else was looking is glimpsed only once, and briefly, when Ann Goodman (a Binghamton resident who let the teenage Serling babysit her infant boy) recalls coming back early to fetch something she’d forgotten and hearing that “perfect young man” yelling at her baby, “You son of a bitch! You go to bed and go to sleep!” This stranger mysteriously surfaces after twenty-one pages of idyllic boyhood. Whatever made Rod Serling run, it wasn’t just the war.

The book concludes, as did Serling’s own career, with lapses in taste – Engel summons Serling to narrate his own morgue appearance (been reading

WIRED, have we?), and dares to summarize 348 pages of pitiful human and professional failures with homilies on the 349th about how the quality of his few successes outweighed the greater number of his flops. Evidently Serling himself spent much of his life questioning whether his early successes – “**Patterns**” and “**Requiem for a Heavyweight**” – had been flukes; even if one doesn’t believe it, one closes this sad book feeling persuaded that they were.

I can’t dismiss Mr. Engel’s book without specifically criticizing his publisher for not including an index, as well as for callously wrapping the life of the man who created THE TWILIGHT ZONE in a dust jacket that would better suit THE TALES FROM THE DARKSIDE COMPANION.

Thankfully, after Serling the man, there remains the better half of his art: THE TWILIGHT ZONE. Bantam’s new edition of Zicree’s THE TWILIGHT ZONE COMPANION, contrary to the hyperbole of its 30th Anniversary tie-in, appears to have not been “revised” at all (the main text still tells us that “**Miniature**” and “**Sounds and Silences**” were aired only once) and “expanded” by only a 17-page addendum and 2 photos, not including a flatteringly crowded index and a paragraph “about the Author.” The 1983 feature film version and, more relevantly to this guide, the revivals of the series on CBS-TV and in syndication, are given only a cursory glance in these new pages, which provide sufficient evidence that information was available for a far more thorough job. Zicree seems to have shrugged-off additional episode guides for these incarnations of the series out of reverence for Serling but, if so, out of faithfulness to him, the author has cheated on his own title.

The Addendum chapter does provide some startling Watchdog items for fans of the underrated network and syndication revival series, which have since been shuffled together for syndication via MGM/UA Television. Zicree reveals that some episodes from CBS’ 1985 hour-long season have actually been altered for rebroadcast in their 22m syndication slots. Two of the better episodes, Wes Craven’s “**Her Pilgrim Soul**” and “**Message from Charity**”, are being syndicated as two-parters, incorporating footage swept up from the cutting room floor; unfortunately, the new footage will pad rather than illuminate. The most shocking revelation is that *nine* minutes have been cut from the syndication print of the revival’s finest episode, Harlan Ellison’s “**Paladin of the Last Hour**” (which committed the unpardonable sin of running 31 minutes). That MGM/UA didn’t consider pairing it with a complimentary episode and offering it to stations as a 60-minute TZ special is heinously short-sighted; those of us who taped “**Paladin**” during its original airing are fortunate indeed.

The Letterbox



We were startled and gratified to discover that most of our pre-publication subscription orders came accompanied by complimentary letters, suggestions and notes of encouragement. For this reason, *VIDEO WATCHDOG* is in a position to introduce a letters column in its first issue. Readers are urged to use this column to share their own home video discoveries, searches or adventures. Bear in mind, however, that *THE LETTERBOX* is not intended as a trading post for tape-swappers. A perfect model of the kind of letter we love to receive comes from our very first overseas subscriber...

Dear Tim,

Many thanks for printing extracts of my letter about **LAST HOUSE ON THE LEFT** in your "Video Watchdog" column in

GOREZONE #11. The most complete version of this film must be the Dutch video release, which is letterboxed and runs 80m, 40s (at PAL speed = 84m at NTSC speed). I would be very surprised if a longer version exists – Wes Craven says it was originally 90m – maybe that was a slow projector! Cinema projection speeds can vary quite significantly from 24 fps (frames per second) but, whenever films are transferred onto PAL video they are sped up to 25 fps. However, when NTSC tapes are transferred to PAL they remain at 24 fps, making comparisons difficult.

You also wrote that uncut cassettes of **INTRUDER** were avail-

able in Britain – this is not true. Colourbox submitted the film to the BBFC (as required by law) and they returned it with a list of cuts which had to be made.

Colourbox made 14 cuts in all, totalling 1m 43s (i.e., virtually all gore removed). However, when such extensive cutting is required, the BBFC asks to see the cut version and decides whether additional cuts are needed. In this case, they thought the version Colourbox released was still too strong and asked for 8 further cuts – totalling 40s – to be made (most of the shots of Sam Raimi on the meathook had to be removed). So Colourbox had to try and retrieve all the cassettes they had sent out and replace them with the so-called "new version." Obviously, some dealers did not bother to send them back, so there are two versions available – one heavily cut,

the other butchered! Amazingly, Colourbox has just released **BAD TASTE** totally uncut! How the BBFC let this through, I don't know. As long as there is no violence towards women, or the tone of the film is not serious, they tend to be more lenient. **BRAIN DAMAGE**, for example, was passed here with only 4 cuts totalling 20s (all during the "blow-job" sequence).

In GOREZONE #9 you reported that American Video was re-releasing the **ILSA** series in their full versions. I managed to get a copy of their version of **ILSA, HAREM KEEPER OF THE OIL SHEIKS** and found it cut to ribbons! Are there two versions on American Video? The print quality is far superior to the [old] Videotrics version, which was fully uncut as far as the gore and violence was concerned and cut only during the simulated sex acts. The Videotrics version is 91m 50s; the American Video version is 91m 5s. By editing the two versions together, I was able to assemble a more complete version running 93m 5s. I would like to know if a complete version does exist on video.

Another film I would really like to see complete is Ruggero Deodato's **CANNIBAL HOLOCAUST**. I have copies from all over the world, but have never seen the sequence in which a bound man is thrown into a river as piranha bait. There is a still in the first issue of DEEP RED, showing a man tied to a pole over a river, but I'm not sure if this is from **CANNIBAL HOLOCAUST**. The most

complete version I have seen is the Danish video release, which runs just over 91m (95m at 24 fps). The Japanese version is uncut, but all frontal nudity is blanked out.

Dario Argento's **OPERA** has

Italian cinemas ran 103m 15s (107m 30s at 24 fps). This was then cut by 1m 45s to get a certificate. I don't know if Argento supervised the cutting of the Australia release, but it has been done very well. Some sequences have just been shortened, and others not vital to the plot completely removed (for example, Betty being given a bottle of perfume which she throws down the sink). There are 19 cuts in all, totalling 11m 20s, to bring the running time down to 91m 55s. This makes it a faster paced film, and all the best sequences are intact – a masterpiece!

**Francis Brewster
Winchester,
Hampshire
England**

*Many thanks, Francis, for your informative letter. Scott Spiegel, the writer-director of **INTRUDER**, was my source for the information concerning that film's British video release; I'm sure your careful notations will be as interesting to him as they were to me.*

*As for the **ILSA** films, I took a personal oath never to write about them again after American Video botched their "uncut" release (the umpteenth time these films have burned their public), but I'll make an exception in this case. What you say about **OIL SHEIKS***

*is obviously correct, but **ILSA, SHE WOLF OF THE SS** was also released by American with missing scenes; nothing too crucial was cut – mostly brief, transitional scenes of Ilsa walking from one torture clinic to another – but it was 3m shorter than the out-of-*

MEMO

Hi, Tim!

Here's my \$15,
money well spent.

By the way, I noticed
the Paramount Video
release of "Targets"
is time-expanded (!).
Every fourth frame is
repeated. Why?

Who knows?!

Yours in
watchdogger,

XX Joe

JOE DANTE

taken a long time to reach video. I've read your reports about the cuts needed in America, but you might like to know it has been released in Australia (with the title **TERROR AT THE OPERA**), with only minor dialogue cuts to shorten its running time. The first version shown in

print Videotrics edition. Like American's other transfers, it does feature superior print quality. American's **ILSA THE WICKED WARDEN** (also available on laserdisc from Image Entertainment) is the "complete" US version but, bear in mind, this was shortened prior to release to 90m. The Japanese version – bearing the original English title **GRETA THE MAD BUTCHER** – reportedly runs 99m and is also letterboxed. American Video tried to make amends for their "Ilsa Three-Pack" by issuing **ILSA, THE TIGRESS OF SIBERIA**. It was the first tape they got right: beautiful print, completely intact. As for the uncut **OIL SHEIKS**, it's no longer in print, but a "hot" version was once released by Videotrics, which also made a "cool" form – the one with lengthy black-outs – for non-adult video stores. The latter edition has unfortunately prevailed. The "hot" version must be one of the most sought-after video titles around; I'd love to see it.

As of this writing, Mogul Video is scheduled to release **CANNIBAL HOLOCAUST**, but are late with it; I personally doubt Mogul will unearth anything the Danes couldn't find. I've seen a bootleg US cassette of the film, which was as "uncut" as you claim the Japanese laserdisc is, yet both of these run only 91m as opposed to the full 95. What's in those extra 4 minutes, Francis? [The "blanked out" genitalia mentioned in this letter is a reference to the Japanese practice of digitally occluding "forbidden" sights on film and video, which essentially turns pubic hair into **cubic** hair. There is likely much of this practice on display in the Japanese **GRETA THE MAD BUTCHER**...]

OK, Tim –
Sign me up for a six issue subscription to VIDEO WATCHDOG. Your

work in FANGO and GOREZONE is very impressive. Good Luck with this new venture.

The main drawback to all this is the lack of availability of many of the films in most video retail outlets – even in New York City. If you're a renter of mainstream megahits, fine; if you want to rent the films of Bava, Fulci, Franco, et al – forget it! I've scouted scores of stores and have even gone as far as renting from Hispanic video stores ("Gracias, Gringo!"). Ever see Rollin's **FASCINATION** in Spanish?

My bottom line is the fact that I do not want to buy these movies for \$20-\$60 a throw on a consistent basis, just to view them – plus I have no great love for mail order in general. However, the economic realities of video retailing is immutable. After all, how many rental turns will a copy of **Vampyros Lesbos: Die Erbin des Dracula** rack up?

James Singer
Jackson Heights, NY

Take heart, James. I firmly believe it's only a matter of time before some young, insightful video entrepreneur realizes there's an audience demographic out there, just dying to be reached: the European/adult fantasy market. A recent ad in VARIETY showed that Cannon Films now owns the overwhelming bulk of the European fantasy boom from the late Fifties through the mid Seventies, ranging from the best of Bava to some elusive works by Jean Rollin. This much product can't lie fallow for long. The American laserdisc market has always been about three years ahead of our video market, and 1990 has already seen the issue of two letterboxed Argento titles, as well as Franco's aforementioned **ILSA THE WICKED WARDEN**. Also, more specialty import shops are opening up and the prices of Japanese tapes and discs are coming down. Dave Marshall tells me that Marshall Discount Video will start

taking Japanese orders by the middle of this year. Even better, I understand Panasonic has announced plans this year to manufacture a multi-standard VCR that will allow the consumer to view – and even chain-record to NTSC! – PAL and SECAM videocassettes. With this, the walls dividing the electronic world will topple to everyone's benefit. Then all we'll complain about is that we didn't take more secondary languages in high school! Believe me, everything is going to surface eventually, and VIDEO WATCHDOG will be the first to tell you where to find it... whatever "it" is!

Dear Tim,
I recently caught Argento's **THE CAT O' NINE TAILS** on Chicago's [superstation] WGN. The print had a new Warner Bros. logo spliced on, and it appeared to be a new transfer. Could this mean Warner wants to hold onto this film and maybe give it a video release?

Marc Edward Heuck
Columbus, OH

Unfortunately, it only means that Warner Bros. holds the television syndication rights to this film, as they do with a handful of Hammer Film Productions (like **DRACULA**, **PRINCE OF DARKNESS**) which they also didn't distribute theatrically. **THE CAT O' NINE TAILS** was originally released by the now-defunct company National General Pictures, and its rights apparently reverted with the collapse of NGP to Dario Argento himself. The film's recent video release by Bingo Video, missing more than 20 minutes of footage (detailed in next issue's "Cutting Room Floor"), proceeded under the presumption of public domain and was not authorized by Argento. The Japanese laserdisc edition, uncut and letterboxed, remains your best bet on this title.

Lon Chaney Jr. wrestled a bear in a deleted scene from MCA Video's THE *what* MAN?

woof.

THE WOLF MAN—That's right! Paramount Video has issued letterboxed S-VHS copies of the second sequel to RAIDERS OF THE LOST *what*?

arf.

Good boy! Most horror movies today have to be cut till the MPAA gives them *what* rating?

RRRRRR....

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Dedicated to The Plaza Theater

I

don't often go to theaters anymore; the sticky floors and the endless noise of other patrons somehow interfere with the dreaming process. The Plaza Theater, formerly of Norwood, Ohio, was my boyhood home-away-from-home. I often visit it in memory.

I saw my first movie, **THE INCREDIBLE SHRINKING MAN**, there at age 3 and ran out screaming when I saw the giant spider. Soon after, my Uncle Ralph took me there to see **THE REVENGE OF THE CREATURE** and, scared witless when the submerged Gillman grabbed a buzzard off a drifting log, I watched the rest of the movie in the reflection on the glasses of the man seated behind me. I spent countless Saturday or Sunday afternoons from 1963-70 at the Plaza's Double Feature matinees. One Halloween they showed a couple of scary movies and, during the intermission, Teenage Frankenstein himself ran through the audience. The Plaza spent several months as an "Adults Only" theater in 1966-7 and, when no adult pedestrians were looking, I'd peer through its locked weekday doors and stare awestruck at its coffee concession. I can remember the feeling in the pit of my stomach when I saw the words **THIS PROPERTY IS CONDEMNED** on its marquee, and the relief I felt on learning that this was only the name of a movie. The Plaza reopened as a family theater in late 1967 and endured constant changes in management until it finally closed forever, my dread coming true, in 1971. The last film I remember seeing there was **THE NIGHT OF THE FOLLOWING DAY**.

I made so many important acquaintances there: Vincent Price, Christopher Lee, Samuel Z. Arkoff, Terence Fisher, Elvis Presley. I once went to see Elvis' **CHARRO!** at the wrong time and ended up reluctantly sitting through its co-feature, **ONCE UPON A TIME IN THE WEST**, instead; Sergio Leone and Ennio Morricone marked me for life. I was also marked by **SPIRITS OF THE DEAD**, so much so that I stood outside the Plaza on the cold night of its last showing, unable to afford a ticket and unable to summon the courage to ask the cashier if I could go in—just long enough to see the Fellini episode again. Four years later, I asked a cashier at a different theater to marry me, but that's a different story.

1

1990

**Batman & Robin • Carnival of Souls • Cut & Run • Jess Franco
Hercules & the Captive Women • Rod Serling • Venezuelan Video**

